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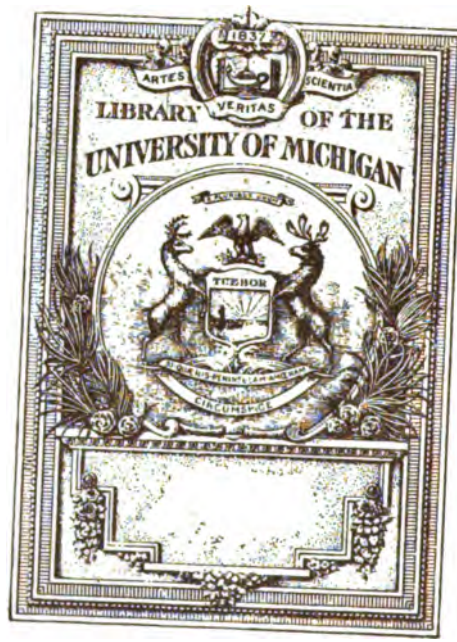
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MYTHICAL BARDS
AND
THE LIFE OF WILLIAM WALLACE

HARVARD STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
VOLUME V

MYTHICAL BARDS AND THE LIFE OF WILLIAM WALLACE

BY
WILLIAM HENRY SCHOFIELD

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TO MY WIFE

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PREFACE

THE writer of a history may, in some respects, be likened unto an adventurous knight, who, having undertaken a perilous enterprise by way of establishing his fame, feels bound, in honor and chivalry, to turn back for no difficulty nor hardship, and never to shrink or quail whatever enemy he may encounter. Under this impression, I resolutely draw my pen, and fall to, with might and main, at those doughty questions and subtle paradoxes, which, like fiery dragons and bloody giants, beset the entrance to my history, and would fain repulse me from the very threshold. And at this moment a gigantic question has started up, which I must needs take by the beard and utterly subdue, before I can advance another step in my historic undertaking."

So Washington Irving begins a chapter in his *Knickerbocker's History of New York*, " in which the author puts a mighty question to the rout, by the assistance of the man in the moon," and thus " delivers thousands of people from great embarrassment."

For several years I have wished to satisfy my conscience with regard to a volume, long promised, on *English Literature from Chaucer to Elizabeth*, but have been held back for this among other reasons, that there were many doughty questions confronting me which could only be solved, if ever, by long research, and which needed more time and courage than I could muster. I did not feel, furthermore, that many thousands of people were waiting to be delivered from embarrassment with respect to them, and when I contemplated conquest, the man in the moon declined his aid. There was no way I could discover except by "prayer and fasting," to which there is not sufficient incentive in our hurried days. Yet I began, and made fair progress until I reached the mountain fastness of Conjecture, where ugly faces stared at me from every side, and I could not "go round about," as Peer Gynt tried to do when confronted by the trolls. One of these faces, that of a tragic blind bard, viewed me so quizzically that I got angry and determined to take him by the beard (every blind bard has been envisaged with a beard) and make him at least yield, whatever happened for the time being to the rest. He seemed, in truth, this my Great Böig, "as the air, invulnerable"; but I stuck to him grimly, and suddenly he disappeared out of the way. The church-bells that helped Peer in dismay — here

symbols of the above-mentioned prayer and fasting — conquered him. He went back to faëry, where he belonged.

All of which, being interpreted, means that I think I have got rid of a bugbear in literary criticism, and I hope the anxious world will show me becoming gratitude. Whether it does or not, I shall not lament, for I have had an invigorating struggle and feel the better for it.

It will be obvious to readers familiar with the processes of research why I passed from my first problem, the secret of Blind Harry, to others allied with it, until the scope of the inquiry carried me far afield, yet not, I trust, without adding to the value of the present publication. I venture now to hope that my little book will interest scholarly readers of various sorts: the student of Scottish history and literature, because it should modify his views regarding a poem that fixed the fame of one of the two great Scottish chiefs, as well as regarding the oldest Scottish dramatic production; the student of Celtic and Scandinavian, because it concerns many documents in those tongues, and puts them to fresh use; the student of the classics, because it deals from a new aspect with Homer's blindness and the vexed Homeric question; the student of universal folklore, because it illustrates the likeness of primitive conceptions of the other world

and mythical bards in different lands; and, finally, literary critics in general, because it discusses the time-honored problem of inspiration, and suggests a broad basis in popular belief for poets' ideas concerning it. In every field the specialist will undoubtedly find faults of commission and omission, but with these I beg him to be indulgent. Before the War, I had lingered longer over the investigation than there was any warrant for in the state of my other work, and now, after nearly two years' constant occupation with public duties, I find myself unable to continue with this particular task, still appealing though it is.

In conclusion, I should like here to emphasize one point touched upon later in the book. Speaking of Wallace, Lord Hailes wrote in 1776: " His achievements, written by Blind Harry, has been long a popular book in Scotland. It would be lost labor to search for the age, name, and condition of an author who either knew not history, or who meant to falsify it." This remark is easily understood as coming from an historian indignant at the credence given, even by learned men, to a work which does indeed contain, as he asserts, many " specious tales " and " childish stories." But, now that the need of indignation is passed, now that the value of the work has been properly assessed, at least by scholars, it can hardly be called lost labor

to inquire into the circumstances of its production and the reasons why it has exerted such a huge influence in shaping the opinions of Scots. Granted that the *Wallace* is not itself veracious history, it nevertheless made history, for there were hosts before Burns into whom it poured a tide of Scottish prejudice which greatly interfered with the calm solution of political difficulties between the North and South in Great Britain. The *Wallace* is a human document; it voiced the feelings of virile men struggling with conflicting emotions of a very common character, drawn on the one hand from patriotism and self-sacrifice, on the other from lust of battle and revenge.

There are epochs when such writings as the *Wallace* are easily evoked. We are only emerging from one now, and grave danger is present in every land that unscrupulous patriots may produce popular biographies of heroic leaders which would perpetuate the hatreds of our own day. Such works, let the example of the *Wallace* bear strong witness, would poison the well of international peace and trust for a terribly prolonged time. May we have abundant works recording noble acts of "trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye," meet to glorify the defenders of our national faith, but may these be completely void of the "vileinye" of hate!

What else is wisdom ? What of men's endeavor
Or God's high grace, so lovely and so great ?
To stand from fear set free, to breathe and wait,
To hold a hand uplifted over hate;
And shall not Loveliness be loved for ever ?

My hearty thanks are due to my colleagues Professors G. L. Kittredge and F. N. Robinson for their kindness in reading the proofs of this book. To Professor Kittredge I am particularly indebted for friendly criticism of it while still in manuscript, from which I greatly profited.

W. H. S.

East Hill,
Peterborough, N. H.

CONTENTS

	PREFACE	*Page* vii
I.	THE PROBLEM OF BLIND HARRY	3
II.	MAJOR'S EVIDENCE	14
III.	THE DWARF'S PART OF THE PLAY	26
IV.	FAERY FOLK	55
V.	IMAGINARY BARDS	79
VI.	THE MYTHICAL AND THE ACTUAL BLIND HARRY	96
VII.	THE REAL AUTHOR OF THE WALLACE	116
VIII.	THE PURPOSE AND SPIRIT OF THE WALLACE	147
IX.	MASTER BLAIR	170
X.	THE WALLACE AS HISTORY	184
XI.	BLIND HARRY AND BLIND HOMER	203
XII.	THE PROGRESS OF CONCEPTIONS OF POESY	239
	NOTES	289
	INDEX	363

MYTHICAL BARDS

AND

THE LIFE OF WILLIAM WALLACE

CHAPTER I

The Problem of Blind Harry

I would . . . tell
How Wallace fought for Scotland, left the name
Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower,
All over his dear country, left the deeds
Of Wallace, like a family of ghosts,
To people the steep rocks and river banks,
Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul
Of independence and stern liberty.

Wordsworth

BLIND HARRY! You cannot avoid him and his problem if you busy yourself ever so little with Scottish literature. For he wrote one of the most influential books that ever appeared in his native land, one that contributed mightily to the renown of a national hero, William Wallace, valiant champion of noble Scots against treacherous Southron foes. Over four centuries have passed since then, yet his work is a mystery still. A new plan must be tried if we hope to discover the secret of the author.

Thirty odd years ago, when I was an undergraduate, and enthusiastic (as I expect ever to remain) for the works of Sir Walter Scott, my atten-

tion was directed to a study of *The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry*,* by Professor Veitch of Glasgow, from which I got my first firm impression of Blind Harry's personality. Professor Veitch wrote:

"He seems to have travelled about the country, carrying his rhymes in his memory as his stock-in-trade, reciting them by lowly hearth and in lordly hall, and touching with his own patriotic flame the hearts of all ranks of his countrymen. . . . The blind Minstrel's only means of subsistence seems to have been the voluntary gifts of his patrons, high and low. Occasionally in his later years he received the dole of a few shillings from the Royal Treasury. He was thus truly a wandering minstrel — blind, aged and poor. About the time when the race of them was nearly dead — and we may look on 'The Life of Wallace' as the actual lay of 'the Last Minstrel' — Major tells us that Harry had access to the highest personages in the land; and thus it was that Scott, in making his aged harper draw near the stately tower of Newark, and pass, though with trembling steps, the embattled portal arch, to be received with a kindly welcome, was but imaginatively repeating the actual experience of the last of the accredited Scottish minstrels.

* Whenever an asterisk or similar mark occurs in the text, a note will be found at the end of the book.

Doubtless, it was often literally true of the blind Minstrel as of Scott's harper that —

> 'When he caught the measure wild,
> The old man raised his face and smiled,
> And lighten'd up his faded eye,
> With all a poet's ecstasy.
> In varying cadence, soft or strong,
> He swept the sounding chords along;
> The present scene, the future lot,
> His toils, his wants, were all forgot;
> Cold diffidence and age's frost
> In the full tide of song were lost.
> Each blank in faithless memory void,
> The poet's glowing thought supplied.' "

Here was surely an appealing picture, especially to a young man. A veritable spell has, indeed, ever been made to cling to the name Blind Harry — a spell of misfortune and pathos, of remoteness and regret. The minstrel! The old minstrel! The last minstrel of an independent folk! Afflicted and neglected, but finely courageous in heart! "Old times have changed, old manners gone." All the more, we have felt, men should keep in affectionate remembrance this moving figure of past time, this poet-patriot of yore.

The Life of William Wallace has long formed one of the chief bulwarks of Scottish nationality. Though Professor Veitch's portrait of the author is frankly unreal and romantic, one can hardly dis-

pute his statement about the influence of the poem: "Let the critical modern historian dissect and reject as he may the stories here and there interposed in the narrative of Blind Harry, it shows but a purblind imagination not to realize the effect of these, and of the whole record implicitly received, on the hearts, the impulses, and the bent of character of the Scottish people, all through the centuries down to the union of the crowns — an influence which nerved and steeled them to self-defence and the hold of national independence, and which is even now manifest in the strong fibre and upright self-respect of the national character."

Over and over again this influence has been emphasized, and critics have repeatedly quoted the words of Robert Burns about the modernized version of the poem that he knew: "The story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice in my veins, which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest."* Only the Bible, it is averred, has been oftener read by the peasantry of Scotland.† Blind Harry they have long regarded reverently, though vaguely, almost as an inspired seer of Holy Writ. And, now, to give him more dignity, scholars write his name on the title-pages of editions, and elsewhere, in the form "Henry the Minstrel," as if the "blind" were too doubtful, the "Harry" too familiar, and

only " the Minstrel " worthy to stand as the poet's memorable designation.

Once grant the universal assumption that Blind Harry was truly a blind minstrel, and he and his book are a bewildering puzzle; for the assumption stated, resting entirely as it does on external evidence, conflicts fiercely with what one would naturally infer from reading the poem itself. The external evidence, apart from the name of the author, consists solely of some incidental remarks made by the theologian John Major (Mair) nearly forty years after the poem was composed, and is dependent, it would seem, on mere imaginative surmise. Major's remarks, however, have biassed, if not perverted, every subsequent judgment of the *Wallace*, both as a literary and an historical document. Until recently all critics of the poem have quoted or referred to them as affording trustworthy information regarding the writer, and have then sought more or less candidly to explain the poem as more or less natural for such an author as Major described.

Yet over fifty years ago Professor Craik wrote as follows: " Were it not for Major's statement, and the common epithet that has attached itself to his name, we should scarcely have supposed that the author of Wallace had been either blind from his birth or blind at all. He nowhere himself alludes to

any such circumstance. His poem, besides, abounds in descriptive passages, and in allusions to natural appearances and other objects of sight. . . . Nor are his apparent literary acquirements to be very easily reconciled with Major's account. . . . What is most remarkable is that he distinctly declares his poem to be throughout a translation from the Latin." *

This sort of questioning has of late grown insistent, and the discrepancy between the supposed character of the author and the actual character of the book has come to seem more and more incomprehensible. That a simple wandering minstrel, blind from birth, relying on others' bounty for food and clothing, as Major depicts him, could have been the author of so sophisticated a book as the *Wallace*, a carefully-wrought poem of nearly twelve thousand lines, chiefly in heroic couplets, revealing close study of Chaucer, even to the introduction of the metre of his *Complaint of Anelida upon Arcite* and other intricate stanzas, stamped throughout with conventions of literary artifice, replete with foreign, aureate words, and displaying considerable knowledge of classical mythology, astrology and heraldry, is more than critics nowadays are ready to believe.

The poet's blindness, however, remains a matter of sore dispute. Some, indeed, have shown im-

patience with the unending discussion of the question, conceiving rather strangely that it was merely a side issue which had really no place in an estimate of the literary merit of the work; but they have not ventured to deny the fact itself. "The question," says Dr. Craigie, "has often been discussed whether Blind Harry was really blind, or at least whether John Major was right in saying that he was blind from his birth. . . . That the minstrel was blind for a great part of his life must be accepted as certain, both from Major's testimony and from his name itself, but it is quite possible that his blindness in earlier life may only have been partial. It is not uncommon even yet, especially in country districts, to call people blind who have really only defective vision, and it is by no means beyond the bounds of possibility that the minstrel may never have been totally blind. But to make the poem any test of this seems a very precarious proceeding; we might with equal possibility assert that we have not Blind Harry's *Wallace* at all — neither the MS. nor the early editions say so!" *

In 1900, nevertheless, Mr. J. T. T. Brown attempted the precarious proceeding and stoutly maintained, on the basis of internal evidence, that we have not Blind Harry's *Wallace* at all, at least not in anything like its original form. In his *Wal-*

lace and Bruce Restudied * is to be found the first reasoned repudiation of the poem as the unassisted work of a blind minstrel, save in so far as he might have resorted to dictation for its recording.† What appeared to Mr. Brown the most probable explanation of the situation, he put as follows: " Harry, a poor blind man, dwelling in or near Linlithgow, was one of the numerous class of itinerant performers who obtained admission occasionally to the Court in order to amuse the King and courtiers. His special talent was that of a raconteur of gests relating to William Wallace, folk stories picked up on his journeyings and turned by him into verse. It may very well be that in Harry we have the begetter of *The Wallace*, his metrical effusions suggesting to the clerk John Ramsay a theme for a national epic worthy to be in some measure complementary to *The Bruce* of John Barbour."

This hypothesis of combined authorship has found no favor with scholars, and Ramsay has been rightly denied any part in the composition of the poem.‡ Still, though certain reviewers have inclined to accept as final Mr. Brown's arguments against Blind Harry as alone responsible for the work,§ the general trend of criticism remains much as before. " The hypothesis that best fits the whole circumstances of the case," writes Mr. T. F. Henderson, in his popular book on *Scottish*

Vernacular Literature,* " is that Harry — otherwise nameless except as ' Blind ' — was, as Major states, blind from his birth, and, as he himself records, a ' burel,' or unlearned man." Mr. Henderson even continues to urge the author's blindness, humble position, and ignorance as an explanation of certain unfortunate characteristics of the poem. " For much of the preposterousness of Harry's stories — especially his amazing accounts of combats — his blindness must be held responsible. He could not recognize the sheer impossibility of many of his glosses or inventions." " Of course, being but a minstrel, Harry has the special defects of the minstrel's qualities. Compare the *Wallace*, for example, with Barbour's *Bruce*, or Henryson's *Fables*, and the general inferiority of calibre proclaims Harry to have been but a ' burel ' man. An accomplished minstrel, it is true — though representing minstrelsy in its decadence, minstrelsy divorced from chivalry, — and saturated with various poetic influences and traditions; also, it is clear, of robust personality, and animated with much rough poetic ardour, but devoid of true intellectual discipline as of consistent moral dignity; wofully, if not wilfully, heedless of patent historic facts; childishly credulous, and combining with a certain rugged pathos a braggardism that is frankly, and even fervently, brutal." Not unnaturally, when

one considers all the supposed facts that he tried to reconcile, Mr. Henderson was forced to the conclusion: "Both Blind Harry and his poem are something of a conundrum."

The latest scholarly judgment on the subject in print is that of Mr. George Neilson, who, in an illuminating essay published in 1910,* speaks of the *Wallace* as "a conscious heroic poem of a type elaborate, ambitious, and highly developed," which "bears too many marks of distinctly iterary origins to have been written by one who was congenitally blind." Yet, while Mr. Neilson admits that "a greater gulf than usual stands between the poem and the poet," it never occurred to him to dispute the traditional conception of "Henry the Minstrel," who, he holds certain, was blind in his later years. On the other hand, Professor Francis Lane Childs, in an admirable Harvard thesis of the year 1913, still unpublished,† goes so far as to deny Harry's authorship of the poem; but he does not question the blind minstrel's actual existence.

My point of view is different. I assume that the author of the *Wallace* was called Blind Harry; but I believe that he was not a minstrel at all in the ordinary acceptation of the term, and that he was never blind. I venture to hold that Blind Harry was only the author's pseudonym, and I shall try to establish the existence in myth and show the

nature of the strange personage who has always been treated as the real author of the work. This will necessitate a consideration of many documents of divers lands and ages, which should prove of interest for its own sake, as well as for its bearing on the immediate problem in hand. The inquiry will lead, I hope, to significant conclusions as to mythical bards of far greater repute than Blind Harry, but it will aim first to throw light on the background, character, and value of the *Wallace*, a true understanding of which has hitherto been limited by misapprehensions regarding the manner of its composition.

CHAPTER II

Major's Evidence

> But all is dark
> Around thine aged top, and thy clear fount
> Exhales in mists to heaven.
>
> *Endymion*

DESPITE the fact that no name is attached to the *Wallace* in the unique copy made by the scribe John Ramsay in 1488,* or apparently in the earliest editions, we have strong evidence that it passed current from the start as Blind Harry's work. Dunbar, as is well known, mentions Blind Harry among the " makaris " who were dead before he wrote his famous *Lament*, in 1507, and no one doubts that this poet is identical with the writer of the same name to whom, as we have seen, Major,† in 1521, attributes a " whole book " about Wallace, " written with great skill in vernacular rhymes " during the historian's lifetime; or that he was the author of the " Blind Harry's Book " to which Bellenden in his paraphrase of Hector Boece's history (1536),‡ and William Stewart in his metrical *Book of the Chronicles of Scotland* (1531–35)§ refer as one where the " fashion " of Wallace's youthful deeds was " all declared at great length."

While, then, there is no absolute proof that the poet Blind Harry, Dunbar's predecessor, wrote the *Wallace*, the evidence in favor of its ascription to him, made unhesitatingly by the faithful Major within forty years of the composition of the work, and perpetuated without controversy for almost four hundred years, is sufficiently clear to convince all but the most skeptical, and we may proceed confidently on the assumption that it is correct. The present study will offer new confirmation of the orthodox view, explaining why the name of the poet, far from needing to raise difficulties, was a natural and appropriate one for him to bear. First, however, we must cut at the roots the prevalent conception (based solely, it would seem, even at the beginning, on improper inferences drawn from that name) that the author was actually an indigent blind bard.

Major's statements about Blind Harry appear in his *History of Greater Britain*. Major when he undertook this work was a man over fifty,* and had spent nearly all his mature years as a student and professor at Paris. He had gained a reputation there as a teacher of theology, and not until 1518 was persuaded to return to Scotland to live. He then became Regent of a college at Glasgow, Professor of Theology, and Treasurer of the Chapel Royal. In 1523 he was transferred to St. Andrews,

but returned to Paris in 1525. He wrote his book as a relief from more arduous scholastic labors, primarily attracted by the opportunity it afforded to teach lessons of proper ethical attitude, rebuke current uncritical views of past events, and advocate the union by royal marriage of the realms of England and Scotland. Major was a well-meaning and in many respects an enlightened person, but of a type not uncommon among academic folk, inclined in case of dispute to take the middle way. His biographer, Dr. Mackay, was quite right in saying that "balancing, hesitating, and inconclusive judgment is very characteristic of Major's intellect," * but only partially right in adding: "With regard to the facts of his History, Major shows a wonderfully sound historical instinct, distinguishing truth from the fables with which the Scottish annals were then encrusted." Major, no doubt, desired to distinguish truth from fable, and pompously put on parade his judicial mind; but he showed himself very gullible in regard to legends and took all sorts of mythical persons for real. He believed, for example, that the inhabitants of Rochester were actually inflicted with tails because they mocked St. Augustine, but he declined to assert that the penalty lasted and that children were born with tails. He did not question the existence of Robin Hood (Robertus Hudus) and Little John,

whom he put in the time of Richard I, but he bravely condemned their robberies. He solemnly entered into argument whether it could be true that St. Baldred was buried entire in three different churches.*

As a proud schoolman of Paris, Major naturally assumed that anything written in the vernacular of his land was beneath his praise. He quotes frequently from Froissart, and refers to Monstrelet with respect; but the only historical works he greatly valued were in Latin. "Not even everything that is written in Latin," he says, "has a claim to infallibility, but only to a certain probability; for some of the writings in that language are known to possess more, and others less, of authority."

If one scrutinizes Major's account of Wallace, one soon sees that he used Blind Harry's poem (it had been printed thirteen years) far more than he was willing to admit.† Though he denies its credibility in certain respects, he accepts the general features of the hero's portrait, and certain incidents as there alone presented.

After having actually based his narrative to a considerable degree on his "vulgar" authority, his critical judgment yielding under the stress of his willingness to believe, he salves his conscience by a proud display of judicial protest against a few

features of Blind Harry's story which are so preposterous that it is doubtful if they were ever really credited, even by the most patriotic of the time. And he winds up as follows: "There was one Henry, blind from his birth, who, in the time of my childhood, composed a whole book about William Wallace, and therein he wrote down in our native rhymes — and this was a kind of composition in which he had much skill — all that passed current among the people in his day. I, however, can give but a partial credence to such writings as these. This Henry used to recite his tales in the households of the nobles, and thereby got the food and clothing that he deserved." *

In these words lies the whole basis for the legend of the poet Blind Harry. Even the most ardent Scot, even the stoutest admirer of the *Wallace*, must admit that there is nothing whatever in the work itself to justify belief that it was composed by a blind person such as Major describes. Mr. Neilson voiced the general opinion when he said in 1910: "It is hardly possible to believe that the author of the *Wallace* was blind from birth. It is infinitely more likely that Major blundered in saying so." But if Major blundered in this respect, why not in others? If, as should be clear to all, the author *could* not have been blind from his birth, then we are entitled to take questioningly Major's

other patronizing statement, supported by no one else, that " this Henry used to recite his tales in the households of the nobles, and thereby got the food and clothing which he deserved." Though Major does not perhaps explicitly affirm it, the " tales " he says Harry recited have always been taken to be identical with the " whole book " on Wallace which the critic has just described. Yet there is almost as grave a difficulty in accepting the view that the cultivated poet of the *Wallace* — Major himself noted the great skill of the verse — went about reciting his tales, even *coram principibus*,* for food and clothing, as that he was blind from birth. Major does not pretend to have known Blind Harry. He was an infant, he says, when the poet wrote, and he had gone as a young man to Paris, where he had lived for most of the intervening stretch of twenty-five years wholly absorbed in scholastic pursuits. For Scottish vernacular poetry he had little leisure and less respect. Quite evidently, he did not know anything definite about the author of the *Wallace*, and probably only imagined what he said of him after consideration of his name.

There is one blind poet who since Major's time has leapt into everyone's mind at the mention of Blind Harry, namely Homer. Major was well acquainted with Homer, as is shown by his repeated

references to him in other works.* Very naturally he might have connected the two blind singers, and transferred to the one what he had read of the other. According to the traditionary story of Homer,† "he was a wandering minstrel, blind and old, who travelled from place to place singing his lays to the music of his harp, in the courts of princes or the cottages of peasants,—a dependent upon the voluntary offerings of his hearers." This tradition of Homer embodies all that Major says of Harry, save that Harry was blind *from birth*, which, we have seen, is the most incredible thing in his whole account. That account is entirely lacking in any details that would serve to connect the author of the *Wallace* with any particular person or place, and is no doubt merely an echo of Major's learning.

Major was given to classical parallels. He likens Wallace in different respects to Ulysses, Ajax, and Achilles,‡ and once, speaking of the British belief in the return of Arthur, which he compares with that of the return of Charles of Burgundy and James IV of Scotland, he writes significantly: "Hence you can understand the readiness with which the common people believed the Stygian Jupiter, Hercules, and such men as that sort of people is prone to marvel at, to be immortal; and how the wiser sort, who knew the groundlessness of this belief, were yet unwilling to go contrary to

it, lest the ignorant in their indignation should destroy them," * a wise recognition of the force behind the perpetuation of legend and fable. We shall do well to remember throughout this investigation the tenacity with which "the common people" have everywhere held to beliefs in mythical beings, no matter why scholars have failed to deny their existence altogether.

Apropos of James I, Major remarks: "With the harp, like another Orpheus, he surpassed the Irish or the Wild Scots, who are in that art pre-eminent."† If James I reminded Major of Orpheus, it is not surprising that Blind Harry reminded him of Homer. But still more important to observe is his witness to the consideration that learned men of the time paid the poetry of the Irish or the Wild Scots, and their effort to connect Gaelic with Greek traditions.

Major differentiates carefully between the "Southern" and the "Wild" Scots in language and race. He points out that even then almost the half of Scotland spoke Irish, "and not so long ago," he adds, "it was spoken by the majority of us." He records how "a certain Scot of the mountains, such as they call a Wild Scot, hoary with age," appeared at the coronation of King Alexander, and in his native Irish tongue declared the monarch's genealogy up to the first beginning. "Man by man,

without a break this said Wild Scot recounted the said genealogy, until he arrived at the first Irish Scot who, setting out from the Ebro, a river of the Spains, was the first to set foot in Ireland."* Earlier† the pious historian had taken pains to relate stories from the old chronicles about Nealus King of the Greeks and his son Gathelus, who married a daughter of Pharaoh of Egypt, by name Scota, and after Pharaoh's drowning went to Spain, journeying thence to Hibernia. He did not admit the truth of all these stories, but he held it certain "that the Irish are descended from the Spaniards and the Scottish Britons from the Irish."

Such traditions, evidently, were accepted also by the author of the *Wallace*, who speaks of Edward I and the way he carried the coronation stone of Scone to England, as follows:

> The croune he tuk apon that sammyne stane
> At Gadalos send with his sone fra Spane,
> Quhen Iber Scot fyrst in till Irland come.
> At Canemor syne king Fergus has it nome;
> Brocht it till Scwne, and stapill maid it thar,‡
> Quhar kingis was cround viij hundyr ȝer and mar,
> Befor the tyme at king Eduuard it fand.

There was, in truth, great activity in the fifteenth century on the part of the Highland clans in connecting themselves with Gaelic ancestors.§ In the manuscript genealogies of that time, one group

of these (including the Macdonalds, Macdougals, Macneills, Maclauchlans, and Macewens) were made out to be descendants of a fabulous Irish monarch, Conn of the Hundred Battles, to whom Blind Harry appears to allude in his genealogical introduction to the *Wallace*, where he remarks: "as Conus cornyklis bers on hand"—an allusion never hitherto explained,* yet suggestive as further indicating the author's literary interest.

In the fifteenth century the Highlanders were very much in the thought of other Scots, and continued so even after the Lordship of the Isles was abolished in 1545. James IV made frequent visits to the north and west of his realm, and found a knowledge of Gaelic a useful accomplishment.† In the west particularly, there then existed a veritable school of bards (in touch with the sennachies of Ireland) whom courtly poets were wont to ridicule. Holland, in his *Howlat*,‡ represents the rook as " a bard out of Ireland " madly talking Gaelic — a passage which evidently became popular, for Blind Harry shows his acquaintance with it, and Montgomery imitated it in his *Answer to a Highlandman's Invective*.§ Dunbar was so notorious for his abuse of the Erse that Kennedy's rebuke to him in their famous *Flyting* was a pointed shaft:

> Thow lufis nane Irische, elf, I vnderstand,
> Bot it suld be all trew Scottis mennis lede;

It was the gud langage of this land,
And Scota it causit to multiply and sprede,
Quhill Corspatrick that we of tressoun reid,
Thy forefader, maid Irisch and Irisch men thin,
Throw his tressoun broght Inglise rumplis in,
Sa wald thy self, mycht thou to him succede.*

Dunbar most effectively ridicules the Erse in the Highland pageant he introduces into his *Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*, where he refers to the comrades of a traitor MacFadden, of whom Blind Harry tells: when he cried his coronach in hell —

Erschemen so gadderit him abowt,
In hell grit rowme thay tuke.

Thae tarmegantis, with tag and tatter,
Ffull lowd in Ersche begowth to clatter,
And rowp lyk revin and ruke:
The Devill sa devit wes with thair ȝell,
That in the depest pit of hell
He smorit thame with smvke.†

Though Dunbar's references to the Erse are perhaps in the main humorous, not really revealing that "strong aversion" critics speak about, they surely attest the poet's interest in the Highlanders and their traditions, which is a point of importance in our investigation. He, as well as Kennedy, had a strong appetite for "sic eloquence as thay in Erschry vse."

The Scotch-Irish question kept burning a considerable while, and Sir David Lyndsay in the

Monarchie * declared that, after his "conceit," if St. Jerome had been born in Argyle he would have "done compile" his books in the Irish tongue. As a result of the agitation, stories in the Irish tongue no doubt gained wider currency.

Knowledge of Blind Harry begins and ends with Major and Dunbar. Major in his History gives the first sure evidence of his connection with the *Wallace*, and Dunbar in his *Lament* gives the first sure testimony to his existence as a poet. But if we had only these two references we should have no key to the problem of Blind Harry already defined. We must turn to another poem by Dunbar for the help needed. It will guide us to that prime requisite for an understanding of the *Wallace*, an understanding of the author's assumed name.

CHAPTER III

The Dwarf's Part of the Play

That Dwarf was scarcely an earthly man,
If the tales were true, that of him ran
Through all the Border, far and near.
Lay of the Last Minstrel

OFTEN mentioned in connection with Blind Harry, is a "Little Interlude" attributed to Dunbar, entitled *The Droichis* [*Dwarf's*] *Part of the Play*, or "The Manner of the Crying of a Play," probably written about 1500.* Though highly fantastic and coarse, this poem possesses general interest for the folklore material it contains, as well as for the vigor of its style and the fact that it is the earliest extant specimen of dramatic verse in Scots.

Here a Dwarf makes a whirlwind appearance on the stage, crying "See who is come now!" promptly announces that he is a sergeant out of Sultan-land, or "the spirit of Guy," or one who can "go by the sky, light as the lind." "Yet," he adds:

I trowe that I wary;
I am the nakit Blynd Hary,
That lang has bene in the Fary,
Farleis to fynd.†

It is, indeed, one of the mysteries of criticism that every commentator on this passage has seen in it an allusion by name to the author of the *Wallace*. In his learned edition of Dunbar, Professor Schipper wrote: " The poet Blind Harry, or Henry the Minstrel, the author of the famous epic poem ' William Wallace,' seems to be alluded to here as a popular personage." Just what Professor Schipper meant by " a popular personage " is not clear; but surely, to be able to identify the Dwarf with the author of the *Wallace*, he must have given scant consideration to the former's account of himself. The Dwarf is particular to affirm that he came of no mortal race. His fore-grandsire, he tells us, was the Ossianic hero whom we have come to know as Fingal:

> Fyn Mac Kowle
> That dang the devill, and gart [made] him ȝowle,
> The skyis ranyd quhen he wald scowle,
> He trublit all the air.

His grandsire was Gog Magog, who, when he grew up, had a mouth eleven miles wide and teeth ten ells square.

> He wald upon his tais stand,
> And tak the sternis doune with his hand,
> And set them in a gold garland
> Above his wyfis hair.*

Gog's wife was an unholy terror. "She spit Loch Lomond with her lips," and performed still stiffer deeds, too indecent to repeat. And the Dwarf's father, Gow Mackmorne, was so huge a champion that he had to be cut even from her womb.

> Or he of eld was ȝeris thre,
> He wald stepe our the Occeane se;
> The mone sprang nevir above his kne;
> The hevyn had of him feir.

As for the Dwarf himself, he was older than King Arthur or Gawain, and now all shrivelled-up for age — "this little, as ye may see."

"The genius of wealth," wrote Professor Schipper,* "is here represented under the character of a dwarfish minstrel, who introduces himself, it is true, as the well-known poet Blind Harry, but who probably was nobody else but Dunbar himself, whose stature must have been very small." † Dr. Mackay went one step farther and declared it possible "that Dunbar himself may have acted as well as written the part of the Dwarf;" ‡ and Mr. Brown followed on with the remark that if the poet was himself a dwarf, "his recitation of gests recounting the prowess of the national hero would doubtless be all the more mirth-provoking on that account." Such speculation was unjustified. But the following comment by Professor Schipper reached the lowest level of conjecture: "From the

epithet *nakit* connected with his [Blind Harry's] name in this verse, it would appear that the old minstrel lived in needy circumstances during the later years of his life, when the infirmities of old age may have hindered him from continuing his occupation, wandering from one nobleman's seat to the other and reciting pieces of his poems there."

This conclusion is really bewildering, both in its initial assumption and in its ridiculous development. One who had before him only the three lines above quoted, in which the name Blind Harry appears, might perhaps carelessly think they contained a reference, though a very puzzling one, to an actual poet; but how an editor of the complete text could stumble into so deep a pit of error is hard to comprehend. Especially is that the case when one realizes that Professor Schipper understood the meaning of the words in the passage.* Mr. Brown, on the contrary, made a grave mistake in translating them. "*The Littill Interlud*," the latter says, "seems to belong to some lost masque . . . in which a dwarf personating Blynd Harry was brought in. After introducing himself as a 'Sultan from Syria, a giant that by the strength of his own hand could bind bears,' he goes on to say that he 'warrants himself to be the naked Blynd Harry who has long been on the road in quest of strange stories.' *Fary* or *faré* is simply *way, road, journey;*

and Major's *quae vulgo dicebantur* exactly corresponds to the 'farleis,' or wonderful stories of the prowess of Wallace, floating in tradition and picked up by the way by the wandering minstrel." * But "fary," of course, is merely "faery," fairyland,† and "farleis" means "wonders." Both these words are used in the familiar line at the opening of *Piers Plowman:* "Me byfel a ferly, of fairy me thou3te." Quite obviously the passage only says: "I am the naked Blind Harry that have been long in faery to find ferlys." There is nothing whatever in the poem that can reasonably be construed as a reference to the author of the *Wallace,* and the interpretation which makes the lines under discussion mean "Blynd Harry who has long been on the road in quest of strange stories" of the prowess of Wallace, is astonishingly wrong.

These lines, nevertheless, are vitally important to a proper understanding of the Scottish poet's name. They afford us unquestionable proof that in Dunbar's time, shortly after the *Wallace* was written, a mythical person called Blind Harry was reputed to have been long in faery and seen wonders.

Though no one should ask for more proof than Dunbar's allusion to accept Blind Harry as a figure in myth, many may need to be made acquainted with popular traditions concerning faery, the visits of mortals there, and the rôle of faery dwarfs in

fiction, before they can fully recognize the significance of that allusion in settling the immediate question of the authorship of the *Wallace*, or perceive how from a consideration of tales of otherworld life important conclusions may be drawn with regard to the ancient blind bards who so often appear as mouthpieces of epic story, as well as to the mysterious wise men who for ages have voiced others' prophecies.

Let us however, begin, our inquiry, tending to that end, by a more careful scrutiny of *The Dwarf's Part of the Play* than has heretofore been given that unique and most interesting poem. The results should be worth while in themselves, as explaining the work of Dunbar and its pagan Celtic background, but still more so, for our present purpose, as revealing the character of Blind Harry, the personage of fiction.

The Interlude, it is evident, was intended not simply to convey good wishes to its hearers, the magistrates of Edinburgh, but to arouse their mirth. Its Brobdingnagian humor was calculated to appeal to men at a gay assembly, and the poet's exaggerated account of the exploits of Blind Harry's Gaelic ancestors was certainly the more appreciated by an audience who knew the fine old tales concerning that illustrious band. Dunbar's mood in dealing with these worthies is not unlike

that of the author of the modern song about the famous Cumhail (pronounced Cool), the Dwarf's great-grandsire:

> Old King Cole was a merry old soul,
> And a merry old soul was he.

It is merely jocular, amiably bacchic. Dunbar was a jovial old-time Scot, and his words are a bit pungent for our taste, but they imply real knowledge on his part of the traditions he treats freely.

The Interlude, as should first be noted, is merely a monologue in which a grotesque supernatural being utters pretensions of what seem a preposterous nature, and finally interprets himself allegorically as Wealth, a symbol of gifts he has the power to dispense. The Dwarf * tells his hearers that he was born far forth in the deserts of Ind, among lions and bears, yet (as has already been mentioned) that he derived directly from ancient Gaels. He had lived as much as a thousand years. Worthy King Arthur, we are informed, and Gawain, and many a bold bairn of Britain, had died and in the wars been slain since he could wield a spear. By his explicit statement, we learn that he went through " variations "; he changed his shape. Now he was a sergeant out of Sultan-land, now the ghost of Guy, now naked Blind Harry; he could " fly by the sky, and light as the lind."

I haif bene formest evir in feild,
And now sa lang I haif borne sheild,
That I am crynit in for eild
  This littill, as ȝe may sie.
I haif bene banist vndir the lynd
This lang tyme, that nane cowld me fynd,
Quhill now with this last eistin wynd,
  I am cum heir perdie.

He had come to Scotland, he knew never how — " with the whirlwind "!

In this work, if I mistake not, Dunbar shows familiarity with an old Celtic type of poem, voicing pre-Christian animistic beliefs, of which we have two extant specimens, put respectively into the mouths of the mythical Irish and Welsh shape-shifting bards Amergin and Taliessin.

What is supposed to be one of the most ancient of Irish literary records * is the poem represented as uttered by the former, druid-wizard of the fabulous Milesian settlers when these first landed in Erin. I am this and that, proclaims Amergin, mentioning many beings and things. " I am a cunning artist; I am a gigantic, sword-wielding champion; I can shift my shape like a god. . . . I am a bard who is called upon by seafarers to prophesy. . . . I prophesy victory. I end my song by prophesying all other good things."

Likewise Taliessin, then a weak little man, is made to sing of numerous aspects of himself. " I

have been in many shapes," he begins, "before I attained a congenial form"; whereupon he enumerates these at length.* According to his proud assertion in another poem, he had been everywhere from heaven to hell, with all sorts and conditions of men, from the beginning of the world.

I was with my Lord in the highest sphere,
On the fall of Lucifer into the depth of hell.
I have borne a banner before Alexander; . . .
I was in the court of Don before the birth of Gwydion.
I was instructor to Eli and Enoc. . . .
I am a wonder whose origin is not known;
I have been in Asia with Noah in the Ark;
I have seen the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra; . . .
I am now come here † to the remnant of Troia. . . .
I shall be until the day of doom on the face of the earth;
And it is not known whether my body is flesh or fish.

The significance of Taliessin's boasts as revealing mythical notions of the origins of poesy, we shall dwell on later. The importance of his claims in showing his superhuman character does not need to be stressed. He had been in faery. He knew all about otherworld dwarfs. He appeared as a "little man" himself, and spoke of his ancestry and varying forms.

Amergin and Taliessin are dignified representatives of numerous beings with like attributes who meet us at every turn in Celtic folklore; with them too we need acquaintance if we would fully under-

stand Dunbar's poem. Perhaps the most nearly cognate in popular Gaelic tradition is a familiar spirit named Luridan who, we are informed,* dwelt in the Orkney Isle of Pomona in the character of Brownie: "This Luridan affirmed that he was the *genius astral* of that island; that his place or residence in the days of Solomon and David was at Jerusalem; that then he was called by the Jews Belelah [Belial]; after that, he remained long in the dominion of Wales, instructing their bards in British poesy and prophecies, being called Urthin Wadd Elgin; 'and now,' said he, 'I have removed hither, and, alas! my continuance is but short, for in seventy years I must resign my place to Balkin, lord of the Northern mountains.' Many wonderful and incredible things did he also relate of this Balkin . . . affirming that he was shaped like a satyr, and fed upon the air, having wife and children to the number of twelve thousand, which were the brood of the Northern Fairies, inhabiting Sutherland and Caithness, with the adjacent islands . . . that their speech was ancient Irish, and their dwelling the caverns of the rocks and mountains."

In another form of this tradition,† Luridan, "spirit of the air," is said to have come over with Julius Caesar and remained "some hundred of years" in Wales, whence he betook himself to the

North in the year 1500. When conjured up, it is said, he will appear "like a little dwarf with a crooked nose," and can go in an hour "whither he will, to the Turks or to the uttermost parts of the earth." Balkin, similarly conjured up, will appear "like the great god Bacchus upon a little goat," preceded by an innumerable company of dwarfs. He will deliver to the exorcist "a little spirit of a span long, like a little Ethiop," which will become a familiar to his possessor and may be named as the latter likes.

The identification of Luridan with Brownie (though brownies were not then mere playthings as now) illustrates the way myth is regularly degraded and suggests the various kinds of supernatural beings with whom Dunbar was acquainted. The number of uncanny spirits abroad in his time was legion. Reginald Scot enumerates enough in the following passage:* "Our mothers' maids," he says, "have so frayed us with bull-beggars, spirits, witches, urchins, elves, hags, fairies, satyrs, pans, fauns, silens, kit-with-the-canstick, tritons, centaurs, dwarfs, giants, imps, calcars, . . . Robin Goodfellow, the spoorn, the mare, the man-in-the-oak, the hell-wain, the firedrake, the puckle, . . . Tom Tumbler, Boneless, and such other bugs, that we are afraid of our own shadows." All of these creatures of the imagination were evidently causes

of terror to the people, and against them children particularly were continuously warned to " watch out." The " bug," a name (probably from the Welsh *bwg* — Irish *puca*, a spectre) that we still preserve in our bugbear, bugaboo, and bogy, was but another form of " puck." Langland includes a " helle-pouke " among things and beings that " grieve " men but that Love disarms (*Caritas expellit omnem timorem* ").* Likewise, Spenser wrote:

> Ne let the pouke nor other evil sprites,
> Ne let mischievous witches with their charms,
> Ne let hobgoblins, names whose sense we see not,
> Fray us with things that be not.†

With such facts in mind, we are not surprised to have Dunbar make his roguish, shape-shifting, aerial Dwarf exclaim:

> Quha is cum heir bot I,
> A bawld busteous bellomy,
> Amang 3ow all to cry a cry
> With ane michty soun ?

Satyrs and Pans are associated with dwarfs and fairies in Scot's list of " bugs," or pucks, and Dunbar was too good a classical scholar not to recall these ancient daemonic figures when he wrote. The little old naked god Pan, reputed son of Hermes, has long been a particularly well-known and popular figure in Great Britain, and his name has given us a common word that everyone now

uses without thought of its origin. Pan, scholars at least remember, like Puck, had a way of frightening folk by suddenly appearing among them, crying fiercely, and thus creating a "panic." He even frightened the Titans in their fight with the gods. The Dwarf, then, who came on the stage "with the whirlwind," crying a cry amongst the audience "with a mighty sound," might naturally call himself "a bold busteous bellamy" if bellamy,* the male counterpart of beldame, had come to mean in Scots a terrifying creature, as is clearly indicated by the following words in Blind Harry's *Wallace*, where, unless I misread the passage, the hero is represented as taken for one by an English soldier:

> The capteyne speryt: 'Quhat bellamy may thow be,
> That cummys so grym?' †

And there may be more than appears on the surface in the Dwarf's statement regarding himself, immediately after his calling attention to his Panic attribute:

> That generit am of Gyanis kynd,
> Fra the strong Hercules be strynd;
> Of al the occident and ynd
> My elderis woir the croun.

Undoubtedly it made the groundlings laugh to hear a dwarf declare he was engendered of giant race, though they perhaps remembered Wee Wee

Man of popular ballad fame * who had incredible strength; and fairy-land and giant-land were to them much the same. But Dunbar apparently knew of a deeper connection. Hercules was said to have come to the West and established a sovereignty,† and the poet Alexander Scott makes him perform exactly the feat that Dunbar ascribes to the Dwarf's fore-grandsire:

> Hercules, that aikkis vprent
> And *dang the devill* of hell.‡

To judge from the assertions of the Dwarf, that he was born "far forth in the deserts of Ind," and that of all Occident and Ind his elders wore the crown, he was of the same race as the faery King Oberon, and Shakespeare's Puck, who came to Athens "from the farthest steep of Ind," while there is much to link him with the famous Robin Goodfellow. No elvish figure is more familiar to us than Robin, "merry wanderer of the night," the shrewd and knavish spirit "that frights the maidens of the villagery," whose mad pranks and merry jests are found perpetuated in a tract printed in 1628.§ To these jests and pranks he is there said to have been stimulated by his faery father, who thus reveals the boy's power to him:

> By nature thou hast cunning shifts,
> Which I 'll increase with other gifts.
> Wish what thou wilt, thou shalt it have;

> And for to vex both fool and knave,
> Thou hast the power to change thy shape,
> To horse, to hog, to dog, to ape.

Robin (otherwise called Hobgoblin) does, indeed, many incredible things by turning himself into "divers sundry shapes," such as, in one prank, into a bird, horse, and fish, and at other times into various human forms.* We should note particularly that he appears as a ghost, with a torch in his hand, to frighten an old usurer into liberality, and as a bard.

Robin, it will be remembered, was a naked dwarf, and resented being offered clothes by a maid whom he had helped to break hemp.

> Because thou lay'st me, himpen, hampen,
> I will neither bolt nor stampen;
> 'T is not your garments new or old,
> That Robin loves: I feel no cold.

To have the royal dwarf Blind Harry described as naked, need cause us, then, no surprise. As we read in an amusing Scottish burlesque contemporary with the Interlude, a curiously transformed bit of folklore telling of Berdok, King of Babylon, another shape-shifter who found ferlys in faery:

> Kingis vsit nocht to weir clayis [clothes] in tha dayis
> But ȝeid [went] nakit, as myne auctor sayis;
> Weill cowd he play in clarschocht and on lute.†

Faery dwarfs were skilled in minstrelsy.

We shall now much better understand the variations of Dunbar's Dwarf, who declared he was not only the naked Blind Harry, who had long been in faery, but a sergeant out of Sultan-land, who could bind bears by the strength of his hand. In making this latter association, Dunbar had evidently in mind some such figure as that of the Turk in the curious little romance of *The Turk and Gawain*,* where the Turk is a dwarf, possessed of a cloak of invisibility, and of bewildering strength, who leads the hero through a hill into the underworld and then performs marvellous feats on his behalf. He shows Gawain the residence of the king of the Isle of Man,† whom he declares to be " a heathen Sultan," commanding a hideous rout of giants.

> Many auentures thou shalt see there
> Such as thou neuer saw yare
> In all the world about.

So this dwarf from Sultan-land addresses the knight, who was also to find ferlys in faery. The Turk, we learn, was under a spell and sought aid from a mortal. Thanks to Gawain's mediation, he overcame his enemies, and himself became king of the Isle.

Still another of the Dwarf's variations was " the Ghost of Guy," ‡ a spirit-personage, whose association with Blind Harry and the otherworld Turk is of great interest.

Guy was a citizen of Alexti, near Bayonne, " whose ghost when his body was buried, without sightly form, appeared to his own wife and tormented her greatly, eight days after his burying." Inasmuch " as she ne wist whether it were a gylerie of the fiend or no," she asked counsel of the prior of the monastery near by. He too was afraid that it might be a " gylerie of the fiend," houseled a large company that no harm might come to them, and went to converse with the troubled spirit. The ghost was only " a mere voice and small as of a child," which followed the prior " as the sound of a broom sweeping a pavement "; but it carried on a long argument with the prior and gave him much information about evil spirits and purgatory " in the middle of the earth." It explained that fiends have a way of appearing to dying men to draw them from their belief " by grinding of their teeth and their grimly and grisly looks." The Virgin has power over these fiends because she is " Queen of Heaven, and Lady of the World, and Empress of Hell."

Sir David Lyndsay relates, in the prefatory epistle to his *Dream*, how he amused King James V when his attendant in youth, sometimes singing and dancing, sometimes " playing farces on the floor,"

And sumetyme lyke ane feind, transfigurate,
And sumetyme lyke the greislie gaist of Gye; *
In divers formis oft-tymes disfigurate,
And sumtyme dissagysit full plesandlye.

He might almost have been impersonating the variations of Dunbar's Dwarf.

In mediaeval Scotland, it is well to remember, fairies and fiends were not far asunder, and it was no more remarkable for the long-lived, shape-shifting Luridan, alias Brownie, to have been called Belial than for the long-lived, shape-shifting Dwarf, alias Blind Harry, giant Turk, and Ghost of Guy, to have had a grandsire Gog Magog. In a burlesque Scottish "tragedy," *Sir John Rowll's Cursing*,† written about the date of the Interlude, the author calls upon Belial and all sorts of devils to revenge the stealing of his geese:

Gog and Magog, and grym Garog,
The devil of hell, the theif Harog, . . .
And *Browny* als, that can play kow
Behind the claith, with many mow (more) . . .
And vthiris devillis thair salbe sene,
Als thik as mot in sonis beme."

After reading this poem, one feels rather like Ferdinand, who, when plagued by Ariel, cried:

Hell is empty,
And all the devils are here.

"When the thousand years are expired," wrote St. John the Evangelist, "Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea." * Gog and Magog were made into one giant figure and his fame spread abroad in Britain by Geoffrey of Monmouth,† "in stature twelve cubits, and of such prodigious strength that at one shake he pulled up an oak as if it had been a hazel wand" — another Hercules. The Interlude, it is clear, was not only written in a mood of devilry, but notably concerned devils, or faery folk who were regarded as such.

The numerous otherworld beings who appear in Gaelic story "in divers forms oft times disfigurate" were actually represented by the pious, if not by all serious folk, as "sons of Belial." ‡ For ages the clergy combated popular convictions about the "people of the hills," the Tuatha de Danann,§ not going so far as to deny their existence, but anxiously discountenancing them as evil spirits with whom it was dangerous to have dealings. But even they, with all their power, did not prevent either the stories of the Celtic gods and heroes abundantly, or the belief in them measurably, from being perpetuated in Scotland even to our own day.

Dunbar, as we have seen, identified his Dwarf with a heathen underworld sprite, a spirit of the Christian hereafter, and a blind old man from faery. He made him act like a bold busteous bellamy, a noisy Pan or satyr. He ascribed to him power to prophesy and provide good gifts for men. The well-informed seventeenth-century Scot, the Rev. Mr. Kirk, in his *Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies*,* a book that has been called "a kind of metaphysic of the fairy world," shrewdly remarked: "How much is written of pigmies, fairies, nymphs, sirens, apparitions, which though not the tenth part true, yet could not spring of nothing." † Certainly not, we agree, but of what? Under pain of retarding a little the discussion of the main points here at issue, let us stop a moment to inquire the spring of the various superstitions to which the consideration of Dunbar's poem has naturally led us. And as an aid we may do well to note the following striking words of Thomas Nash, written soon after Shakespeare immortalized fairy lore in his *Midsummer-Night's Dream:* "The Robin-good-fellows, elfs, fairies, hobgoblins of our latter age, which idolatrous former days and the fantastical world of Greece ycleped Fauns, Satyrs, Dryads, Hamadryads, did most of their pranks in the night." This passage, as Nutt pointed out,‡ suggests a parallel "far

closer and weightier in import than its author imagined." "The parallel is a valid and illuminating one, for the fauns and satyrs are of the train of Dionysus, and Dionysus in his oldest aspect is a divinity of growth, vegetable and animal, worshipped, placated, and strengthened for his task, upon the due performance of which depends the material welfare of mankind, by ritual sacrifice. Dionysus was thus at first a god of much the same nature, and standing on the same plane of development as, by assumption, the Irish Tuatha de Danann. But in his case the accounts are at once fairly early and extensive, in theirs late and scanty."

Speaking of the *Robin Goodfellow* of 1628, Nutt adds: "I believe that in this doggrel chapbook we have the worn-down form of the same incident found in the legends of Arthur and Merlin, of Cuchulinn and Mongan, told also in Greek mythology of no less a person than Dionysus, son of Zeus and Semele, the mischievous youth who, as we learn from the Homeric Hymn, amused himself in frightening Greek sailors by transformation tricks of much the same nature as those dear to Puck."

To go farther with such speculation here would be out of place. Suffice it to state that the more one studies the evidence, the more one sees that the

"idolatrous former days" of Britain had close likeness with "the fantastical world of Greece."

The Interlude was plainly written for some gay festival. The Dwarf says he has come to the assembly at Edinburgh with three companions, Welfare, Wantonness and Play, "to put care clean to flight." His last request is for a buxom wife and a bountiful drink. He declares himself the symbol of Wealth, and ends the recital of his own varying manifestations by predicting great prosperity to his hearers, plenteous comfort, which it was his mission to bring.

> My name is Welth. Thairfoir be blyth
> I am cum confort ȝow to kyth.
> Suppois wrechis will wail and wryth,
> All darth I sall gar [make] die.

The Dwarf was a playful and wanton but beneficent spirit, who was able to bring good gifts because he came from the chief seat of wealth, as well as mirth, the land of faery. As we read in the *Voyage of Bran:* *

> Wealth, treasures of every hue,
> Are in Ciuin [Gentle Land], a beauty of freshness,
> Listening to sweet music,
> Drinking the best of wine.

The Dwarf represents, in a form parallel to Brownie-Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, the baser

agricultural *daimones* of ancient Greece, Pans and Fauns and Satyrs, who followed in the train of Bacchus-Dionysus. Dunbar knew Bacchus as "the gladder of the table," while the author of the *Wallace*, crediting the English with an orgy after the hanging at Ayr, remarked: "Thar chyftayne was gret Bachus off wyn." Dunbar also described Pluto as "an elrich incubus in cloak of green,"* even as Chaucer before had called him "king of faerie" † and pictured him with his queen Proserpina disporting and making melody about a well. Walter Map ‡ explicitly mentioned Pan in picturing his dwarf-king Herla, who, like Blind Harry, was "long in faery ferlys to find." Major § connected brownies (*brobne*) with fauns, and gravely expressed doubt whether they really could prophesy, as men in his time asserted. In the Middle Ages, indeed, no argument was needed to connect the classical and Celtic underworlds. The likeness of pagan British and Greek traditions was then recognized by scholars, to the delight of some and the discomfiture of others.

There is reason, not only to connect Dunbar's Dwarf with Dionysus, but also to regard the Interlude as a sort of satyr-play. Hesiod tells of

> the worthless idle race of Satyrs
> And the gods, Kouretes, lovers of sport and dancing.

The Kouretes, says Strabo, "inspire terror by armed dances accompanied by noise and hubbub." * It was the ancient Greek custom to celebrate the feast of Dionysus, whose cult was substantially that of the Kouretes, with orgiastic rites and Bacchanalian revels, and later were enacted mystery-plays in his honor. "The Satyr-play," says Gilbert Murray,† "coming at the end of the tetralogy, represented the joyous arrival of the Reliving Dionysus and his rout of attendant daimones at the end of the Sacer Ludus."

Now the Druids held festivals to the gods which were maintained in mediaeval Scotland at such times as Beltane and Hallowe'en, and at the latter, in special thanksgiving for the harvest, it was still supposed in Dunbar's day that fairies were wont to hold a great revel-rout.‡

Montgomery,§ in his *Flyting* with Polwart, thus describes how the "good neighbours," or fairy Good People, were then thought to act:

In the hinder end of haruest, on Alhallow euen,
When our good nighbours doe ryd, gif I read right,
Some buckled on a bunwand, and some on a been,
Ay trottand in trupes from the twilight;
Some sadleand a shoe aip all graithed into green,
Some hobland on ane hempstalke, hoveand to the hight.
The King of Pharie, and his court, with the Elfe Queen,
With many elrich Incubus, was rydand that night.

Polwart, addressing his opponent in the same colloquy, referring to Argyll, declares:

> Into the land where thou was borne,
> I read of nought bot it was skant;
> Of cattell, cleithing, and of corne,
> *Where wealth and welfaire baith doth want.*

In greater or less degree, all Scotland was in want of these same things, and nothing could have been more appropriate than for Dunbar, if called upon to contribute to a festival entertainment at such a time as Hallowe'en, or more likely May-day,* to picture a supernatural Dwarf, a fertility-daemon, bringing upon the stage Wealth and Welfare, as well as Wantonness and Play.

Even as *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is our pre-eminent fairy fantasy, so Euripides' *Bacchanals* is the preëminent Greek presentation of a daemonic revel; and it is quite as illuminating to compare certain features of the latter as of the former with *The Dwarf's Part of the Play*. It has often been pointed out how marvellously Shakespeare has caught the spirit of ancient fairy lore in his supremely original and sparkling drama, planned to " awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth," and I have already indicated basic resemblances between his fairy figures and Dunbar's Dwarf. But Euripides brings us nearer to the more divine personages Dionysus and Kouros, with whom Pan and

Satyr are connected, even as Brownie and Luridan with the more pretentious, if not more primeval, Amergin and Taliessin.

The *Bacchanals* opens, like most of Euripides' plays,* with a formal speech addressed to the audience by a solitary supernatural figure, in this case Dionysus, alias Bacchus, Iacchus, Bromius, the Clamor-king, which is parallel in idea to the pronouncements of the Celtic shape-shifting poets just mentioned, and in expression as well, to the opening of the Interlude.

The wine-god abruptly appears alone on the stage and thus speaks: †

> I to this land of Thebes have come, Zeus' Son
> Dionysus, born erstwhile of Cadmus' child
> Semele, brought by levin-brand to travail.
> My shape from God to mortal semblance changed . . .
> Leaving the gold-abounding Lydian meads
> And Phrygian, o'er the Persian's sun-smit tracts,
> By Bactrian strongholds, Media's storm-swept land,
> Still pressing on, by Araby the Blest,
> And through all Asia, by the briny sea
> Lying with stately-towered cities thronged,
> Peopled with Hellenes blent with aliens,
> To this of Hellene cities first I come,
> Having established in far lands my dances
> And rites to be God manifest to men.
> . . . . . To another land
> Then, after triumph here, will I depart,
> And manifest myself.

Here we have a mysterious personage, claiming to be the son of great Zeus, who has travelled all over the Occident and Ind, and manifested himself in different shapes, now come to Thebes, with a revel-band, "fraught with many marvels," to show himself in his power and to institute his rites. Dionysus belongs to the Kouretes, givers of wealth, and the chorus in the *Bacchanals* sings:

> Our God, the begotten of Zeus, hath pleasure
> In the glee of the feast where his chalices shine;
> And Peace doth he love, who is giver of treasure,
> Who of Youth is the nursing-mother divine.
> On the high, on the low, doth his bounty bestow
> The joyance that maketh an end of woe,
> The joyance of wine.

"The madding Satyr-band" he leads are all intent on wantonness and play. For them no care; for Thebes no dearth. Dionysus "gave men the grief-assuaging wine." "Dionysus upon women will not thrust chastity." Surely the mood of the Interlude is the mood of the *Bacchanals*.

We have dwelt long — I hope not too long — upon Dunbar's Dwarf and the statements put into his mouth. To illuminate one of his manifestations, it has been necessary to try to illuminate all; for all together go to show the confused background of belief that explains the mythical figure of Blind Harry, long a denizen of faery, with whom we are

primarily concerned. But before we leave the *Bacchanals*, we may well consider the character of a Greek celebrity who appears in the play in company with Dionysus, sense-bereft, but not, like Pentheus, stark-mad —

> The seer
> Tiresias, in dappled fawnskins clad!
> . . . . . O sight for laughter.

"This Tiresias," said Louis Dyer,* "is not the dread shade that defies in Homeric song the power of darkness and seems to live in death. Nor is he the Tiresias of Sophocles, that majestic incarnation of wisdom whose mighty wrath and burning scorn cowed even the spirit of Oedipus the Great. Tiresias in the *Bacchanals* is grotesque, if we forget that Dionysus has entered into him and possessed him, when he comes upon the stage in a Bacchic garb, ill-suited alike to his years and his priestly office. He is bent upon taking his part in Bacchic revellings, and is in the act of seeking another — a companion old like himself, and like himself ill-suited for the dance. This companion appears; he is the royal Cadmus, and shows at the outset eagerness even greater than that of Tiresias for gambolling in the wilderness of Cithaeron, saying:

> 'Where leads the dance, where must we take our turn
> And toss our gray-haired heads? Interpret thou,
> Aged Tiresias; lead my old age,

For thou art wise. The livelong day and night
Untiring with my thyrsus I 'll smite earth.
' Tis sweet for us when we our age forget.'

" Tiresias ends by seeming the less grotesque of the two; it is he who turns apologist for Dionysus, and very skilfully his argument begins:

' We reason not o'er nicely of the gods,
They are the heirlooms by our fathers left,
As old as time; no logic shall destroy them,
Not though the keenest wit should prompt the thought! ' "

These last words of Euripides we should keep in mind throughout our investigation. That Dunbar read the *Bacchanals*, is very improbable. But the conviction will grow strong that Blind Harry and Blind Tiresias are products of the same primitive manner of thought.

In any case, the Blind Harry of the Interlude was decidedly not the author of the *Wallace*.

CHAPTER IV

Faery Folk

'T is Fancy's land to which thou set'st thy feet;
Where still, 't is said, the fairy people meet,
Beneath each birken shade, on mead or hill.
. . . . .
While airy minstrels warble jocund notes.

Collins

WE get nearer to discovering the secret of the dwarf Blind Harry when we see how strikingly what he says of himself in the Interlude —

I am the nakit Blynd Hary
That lang has bene in the Fary,
Farleis to fynd, —

reveals his similarity to Thomas Rhymer, "True Thomas," the famous prophet of Erceldoun. He too was once widely reputed to have been in faery and found ferlys.

According to a fifteenth-century English poem, which rightly charmed Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Rhymer caught sight of a ravishing fairy as he lay longing one merry May day on Huntly banks, and followed her over a high mountain to the Eildon Tree, where he swore to abide with her evermore, "in heaven or hell." Imposing serious conditions,

she took him by a mysterious underground passage through dark water for three days without food, to her marvellous land, where he witnessed one strange ferly after another. All manner of minstrelsy was there, and Thomas dwelt in that solace so enthralled that several years passed as three days. But then, for reasons into which we need not here enter, his " lovely lady " conducted him back to the land of mortals. When she was about to bid him farewell, and he pleaded with her not to leave him without some token of their intimacy, she vouchsafed to make certain prophecies, which were carefully recorded. But still Thomas pleaded to hear more, saying " Tell me yet of some ferly." Repeatedly she gratified his request, and thus conveyed to him much knowledge of profit to him both as a minstrel and a seer.

In a somewhat later poem, *The Prophisies of Rymour, Beid, and Marlyng*,* the agent of the prophecies is " a little man " who was held by one who met him mysteriously by the wayside until he related " uncouth tidings " of the Scottish wars, and exhibited ferlys.† This poem is evidently that with which Sir David Lyndsay says he comforted King James V when he saw him " sorry ":

> The propheceis of Rymour, Beid, and Marlyng,
> And of mony uther plesand storye,
> Of the Reid Etin, and Gyir Carlyng.

The words occur in the same passage in which Lyndsay refers to the "grisly ghost of Guy" and "fiends transfigurate." That Thomas Rhymer might be thought to have to do with a fiend would appear from the account given in the ballad of the transformation of his lovely lady into a naked blear-eyed hag:

Thomas stood up in that stead
And beheld the lady gay:
Her hair it hung over her head,
Her eyes seemed out, they were so gray.

And all her clothing was away
That he before saw in that stead;
Her one shank black, the other gray
And all her body like the lead.

Thomas's experience was like that which Giraldus Cambrensis * ascribes to a Welshman named Meilerius, who had for some time intercourse with what was evidently a fairy mistress. "Suddenly," Giraldus relates, without giving the cause, "instead of a beautiful girl, he found in his arms a hairy, rough, and hideous creature, the sight of which deprived him of his senses, and he became mad. After remaining many years in this condition he was restored to health in the church of St. David's, through the merits of its saints. But having always an extraordinary familiarity with unclean spirits, by seeing them, knowing them, talk-

ing with them, and calling each by his proper name, he was enabled, through their assistance, to foretell future events."

Meilerius was plainly a person of the same sort as he who revealed the future to St. Waltheof, abbot of Melrose (1148–59), as is written in the early alliterative *Prophecy of Waldhave*,* preserved in the famous *Whole Prophecy of Scotland*, where he is pictured as a fearful hairy person dreeing his weird in the wilderness. He would not tell all that Waldhave desired to know, but left him with the words:

> Goe musing upon Merling more if thou wil,
> For I meane for no more, man, at this time.

We certainly cannot help musing upon Merlin after reading of such a figure, especially upon Merlin Sylvester as he appears in the *Vita Merlini*, where he seems to have the attributes of the savage madman Lailoken, who prophesied to St. Kentigern.†

It has been stated that the Thomas story was perhaps the "immediate prototype" of that of Tannhäuser, and many have held that the similarity between Erceldoun and Hörselberg is too great to be accidental. "Between the Tannhäuser legend at one end of the scale, and at the other many a tale picked up in this century, in which the

mortal visitor to Faery is the object of admiration and envy rather than of reprobation, every shade of man's feeling towards the invisible world may be noted." *

Brave efforts have been made to identify Thomas Rhymer, who found ferlys in faery and thus became a wise prophet, with an historical person of the name,† and to give him a prominent place, along with "Henry the Minstrel," in the roll of actual Scottish poets; but such efforts have been ill-advised. Thomas's prophecies, as has long been known, are of various dates, and to call him the author of the thirteenth-century romance *Sir Tristrem* is plainly absurd. That poem may have been attributed to him in the first place because the original French poem on which it is based was written by one Thomas, "Thomas of Brittany"; ‡ but the ascription was no doubt encouraged in order to give more currency to the work.

Scholars may yet try to identify Tam Lin, Young Tamlane, the famous ballad hero, with some historical Scot, Thomas Lynn, or Thomas Lane, Jr.; but so far that has not been done, and we need not labor the point that he is a personage of fiction like Thomas Rhymer. He too, it will be remembered, was taken to faery, but escaped by the help of his mortal true-love. One feature of his story is of particular interest to us in connection with Blind

Harry. When his otherworld mistress recognizes that Tam Lin is lost to her,* she declares that if she had not been taken unawares she would have made him blind.

> " But had I kend, Tam Lin," she says,
> " What now this night I see,
> I wad hae taen out thy twa grey een,
> And put in twa een o tree [wood]." †

Blindness, as an infliction on one forced to leave faery against the will of its most mighty ruler, appears similarly in a story of Celtic type incorporated in the long *Saga of Olaf Tryggvason*.‡ Here Helgi Thorisson is released from life with Ingeborg of the Glittering Plains by the prayers of King Olaf; and this interesting reason for his blinding is given, that his jealous fairy-mistress did not wish Norway's daughters to enjoy his love.

Kirk, who was particularly well acquainted with the ways of fairies,§ dwells upon blindness as a punishment inflicted by them on visitors to ensure secrecy regarding their mode of life. " If any superterraneans," he writes, " be so subtile as to practise sleights for procuring a privacy to any of their mysteries, (such as making use of their ointments, which as Gyges's ring makes them invisible, or nimble, or casts them in a trance, or alters their shape, or makes things appear at a vast distance, etc.) they smite them without pain, as with a puff

of wind, and bereave them of both the natural and acquired sights in the twinkling of an eye."

"There be many places," said Kirk,* "called fairy-hills, which the mountain people think impious and dangerous to peel or discover, by taking earth or wood from them; superstitiously believing the souls of their predecessors to dwell there. And for that end (say they) a mote or mount was dedicate beside every churchyard, to receive the souls till their adjacent bodies arise, and so become as a fairy-hill; they using bodies of air when called abroad. They also affirm those creatures that move invisibly in a house and cast huge great stones but do not much hurt, because counterwrought by some more courteous and charitable spirits that are everywhere ready to defend men (Dan. 10:13), to be souls that have not attained their rest."

Into a fairy-hill (*sidh, shian*) Thomas Rhymer is said finally to have gone, as will be seen from the following traditional story of the Highlands.† When two fiddlers one day came to Inverness "nearly three hundred years ago," they were visited by a venerable-looking, grey-haired old man who offered them large inducements to go with him to his dwelling, outside the town and play there for a dance. "When morning came they took their leave highly gratified with the liberal treatment they had received. It surprised them

greatly to find that it was out of a hill and not a house that they issued, and when they came to the town, they could not recognize any place or person, everything seemed so altered. While they and the townspeople were in mutual amazement, there came up a very old man, who on hearing their story, said: 'You are then the two men who lodged with my great-grandfather, and whom Thomas Rhimer, it was supposed, decoyed to Tomnafurach. Your friends were greatly grieved on your account, but it was a hundred years ago, and your names are now no longer known.' It was the Sabbath day and the bells were tolling; the fiddlers, deeply penetrated with awe at what had occurred, entered the church to join in the offices of religion. They sat in silent meditation while the bell continued ringing, but the moment that the minister commenced the service they crumbled away into dust." This tale will be found to have great likeness to many others written down long centuries before.

We may now consider the connection of Blind Harry, the denizen of faery, with that illustrious personage, who, as Campbell pointed out,* "is in Gaelic tradition and old Gaelic lore the counterpart of Thomas the Rhymour," the mythical bard "to whom nearly all the old poetry in the Highlands is now attributed" — Blind Ossian.

Curiously enough, we have all hitherto overlooked the fact that Dunbar himself definitely connects Blind Harry with Ossian. He represents his faery dwarf as descended from Finn mac Coul, who was Ossian's father; and Harry's own father he makes "mickle" Gow mac Morn, one of the most famous of Fenian heroes. In the fifteenth century Finn and Gow were familiar figures, even in the Lowlands, and various early Scottish poets alluded to them with justifiable confidence that the force of their allusions would be felt. Barbour, who mentions a large body of Highlanders as combatants at Bannockburn, records that the Lord of Lorne incited his men to pursue Bruce by the "ensampill" of Golmakmorn in conflict with Finn.* Gavin Douglas, a contemporary of Dunbar, writes in his *Palace of Honor*,† inscribed to James IV, about

> Greit Gowmakmorne and Fyn Makcoul, and how
> Thay suld be goddis in Ireland as they say.

Sir David Lyndsay a little later introduces the same worthies at the court of James V. In his *Satire of the Three Estates* (1538), he pictures a pardoner as exhibiting

> Ane relict lang and braid
> Of Fine Macoull the richt chaft blaid,
> With teith and al togidder.

And in another place he represents a man as swearing by "grit Gow Makmorne." * Furthermore, genuine Gaelic poems about these and other heroes of the Finn-Ossian cycle were being collected in Scotland by men of station and learning at the beginning of the sixteenth century, as is shown by the precious collection of Scottish Gaelic verse made by the Dean of Lismore.

Now, one of the best known traditions of the great Ossian concerns his residence in Tir na nOg, the Land of Youth, and his return to the land of mortals. The theme is finely treated in a Gaelic poem by Michael Comyn which, though written in 1748, must, Celtic scholars agree,† in matter at least be very old. This *Lay of Oisin*, "as he related it to Saint Patrick," is in the characteristic form of a dialogue, and begins with these words of the Saint:

> O! Noble Oisin, O! son of the king!
> Of greatest actions, valour, and conflicts,
> Relate to us now without despondency,
> How thou livedst after the Fians.

Ossian tells how he went to faery, and how, by standing on a particular stone, he was filled with homesickness; then how the faery queen, "golden-haired Niamh," thrice warned him, when he got leave from her to go back to see Fionn and his great host, on no account to dismount from his

white steed, else he should never return to the Land of Youth, but be an old man, withered and blind. Ossian departed,* but found no tidings of Fionn in Erin. As Niamh had predicted, conditions were not as they had been. After a while, however, a group of men approached, and their leader implored him to remove a large flag of marble under which a host of their fellows lay oppressed in dire extremity. The bard speaks:

I lay upon my right breast,
And I took the flag in my hand;
With the strength and activity of my limbs
I sent it seven perches from its place!

With the force of the very large flag,
The golden girth broke on the white steed;
I came down full suddenly,
On the soles of my two feet on the lea.

No sooner did I come down,
Than the white steed took fright;
He went then on his way,
And I, in sorrow, both weak and feeble.

I lost the sight of my eyes,
My form, my countenance, and my vigour;
I was an old man, poor and blind,
Without strength, understanding, or esteem.

Patrick! there is to thee my story,
As it occurred to myself without a lie,
My going and my adventures in certain,
And my returning from the " Land of Youth."

The injunction put upon Ossian not to dismount from his steed in the land of mortals is duplicated in the ancient tale of Loegaire mac Crimthain, who, after a year's residence in the faery realm of Mag Mell, the Plains of Pleasure, was filled with a desire to seek tidings in his old home of Connaught, but who, mindful of a warning by the ruler of the *sidh*, resisted the urging of his kinsmen to alight on earth, declared that he came merely to bid them farewell, and returned unscathed to the other-world, whence he has not since issued.*

On the other hand, an object lesson in the result of disobedience to faery command was afforded Bran son of Febal, in the oldest extant tale of the sort (written down perhaps as early as the seventh century),† though the hero himself escaped. Bran, we read, was led mysteriously on a voyage, with certain comrades, to the Isle of Joy and the Land of Women, but even among the delights of Elysium homesickness seized one of the company, Nechtan son of Colbran. "His kindred kept praying Bran that he should go to Ireland with him. The woman said to them their going would make them rue. However, they went, and the woman said that none of them should touch the land. Then they went until they arrived at a gathering at Srub Brain. The men asked of them who it was came over the sea. Said Bran: 'I am Bran the son of

Febal,' saith he. However, the other saith: 'We do not know such a one, though the Voyage of Bran is in our ancient stories.' The man [Nechtan] leaps from them out of the coracle. As soon as he touched the earth of Ireland, forthwith he was a heap of ashes, as though he had been in the earth for many hundred years."

In the Breton lay of *Guingamor*,* possibly by Marie de France, we have the same falling from the horse of the mortal returned from faery and his accompanying decrepitude, when he has broken the command of his otherworld mistress; but here the command is not that he refrain from alighting, but that he refrain from eating food in his native land.† Guingamor, in pursuit of a mysterious white stag, is led to a faery castle where were

> Sons de herpes et de vieles
> Chanz de vallez et de puceles.

With the mistress of the place he dwells in delight three hundred years, though these seem to him but three days. When finally he returns home to tell his kinsmen of his adventure, he learns that they are all dead, but that the story of his strange departure is still held in memory by their descendants. To a charcoal-burner he recounts his otherworld experience, and then prepares to return. Growing very hungry, however, he eats some

apples from a tree by the roadside, whereupon he immediately becomes old and feeble.*

A Celtic tale, similar in many respects to that of Bran, is told by Walter Map (†1209) in his *De Nugis Curialium*,† of an ancient British king, by name Herla, who is conducted by a dwarf through a stone ‡ to a mysterious, brilliant underworld, whence he is permitted to return with his men after what seems to them only three days, but with the strict injunction that none shall dismount from horseback until a little dog the dwarf gives them shall leap down from the arms of his holder. Herla rides but a short while before he sees an old shepherd of whom he asks news of the queen. He is informed that stories of Herla's disappearance remain in the tales of the Britons, but that Saxons have ruled in the land for two hundred years. Though nearly overcome by amazement, King Herla keeps to his horse. Some of his followers, however, alight, and when they touch the earth they crumble to dust — a fate that reminds us of what happened to the Two Fiddlers who lived for a hundred years with Thomas Rhymer.

According to Map's story, Herla and his band ride on and on for ages, but at last disappear in the River Wye, in the year that Henry II was crowned. Whether or no it was Map who first connected this tale with the famous " Mesnie Helle-

kin," we cannot say; * but this we know, that Hellekin, who afterwards became the stage-figure Harlequin, was represented in the Middle Ages as a follower of Morgain la Fée,† and the idea of a faery cavalcade was then widespread. Even Arthur was made the leader of the Wild Chase.

In the Scottish romance of *Eger and Grime*,‡ which was written about the same time as the *Wallace*, the "forbidden country" to which the heroes go, like Chrétien's Yvain, is evidently faery. There the lady mistress of the place § heals Eger's grievous wounds by magic ministrations and comforts him by marvellous music. When, despite her urging to the contrary, she finds him determined to leave her, she warns him that if he does so his wounds will break out afresh, and this proves to be the case. When Eger approaches his old home, he feels them so sorely that he falls from his horse, which immediately disappears, and he is abandoned with desperately sad longings for the "far country," the land of all solace. However disfigured, we have here at bottom the same appealing story of a mortal's visit to faery,|| where the art of healing flourishes supreme. The name of the chief hero may be identical with that of Oger le Danois, whose long life of happy youth with Morgain la Fée was to end so disastrously for him when from his head was taken the crown which Morgain had

placed there.* It was Morgain, we recall, who took Arthur to Avalon, land of immortals, whence some day, according to the "Briton hope," he is expected to return, "rex quondam rexque futurus." † As Lydgate wrote:

> He as a king is crowned in fairye,
> With sceptre and sworde, and with his regalye
> Shall resorte, as lorde and souerayne
> Out of fairy, and reigne in Britayne,
> And repayre agayne the Rounde Table.‡

Gawain too went to faery, but has not yet returned to set men an example of his courtesy, as Chaucer conceived might be. Both Arthur and Gawain are brought into connection with Blind Harry by Dunbar.

"The religion of the British tribes," wrote Elton,§ "has exercised an important influence upon literature. The mediaeval romances and the legends which stood for history are full of the 'fair humanities' and figures of its bright mythology. The elemental powers of earth and fire, and the spirits which haunted the waves and streams, appear again as kings in the Irish Annals, or as saints and hermits in Wales. The Knights of the Round Table, Sir Kay and Tristram and the bold Sir Bedivere, betray their divine origin by the attributes which they retained as heroes of romance. It was a goddess, '*Dea quaedam phantastica*,' who

bore the wounded Arthur to the peaceful valley. 'There was little sunlight on its woods and streams, and the nights were dark and gloomy for want of the moon and stars.' This is the country of Oberon and of Sir Huon of Bordeaux. It is the dreamy forest of Arden. In an older mythology, it was the realm of a King of Shadows, the country of Gwyn ap Nudd, who rode as Sir Guyon in the '*Faerie Queene*' —

> 'And knighthood took of good Sir Huon's hand,
> When with King Oberon he came to Fairyland.' "

Attention should also be called to a charming little Scottish ballad entitled *The Wee Wee Man*,* which presents us with a similar personage bred in Blind Harry's own locality, unaffected by courtly array. The Wee Wee Man was so mysteriously strong that he could fling a big stone as far as eye could see, a stone, we read, so big that, even if one were a "Wallace wight," one could not have lifted it to one's knee. The Wee Wee Man's dwelling is said to have been the bonny otherworld, whither he apparently took his mortal lady-love on horseback to see the faery queen, with her gay attendants, in a castle of crystal and gold.

> And there were dancing on the floor,
> Fair ladies jimp and sma;
> But in the twinkling of an eye,
> They sainted clean awa.

In an elaborate version of this theme, a poem in eight-line stanzas,* found in a manuscript of the fourteenth century, a poem closely related to the ballad yet not its source, the recounting of the "ferly" (so it is called) of the "little man" was planned, like that of Thomas Rhymer, to start a string of prophecies.† Such instances of the use of faery stories in Scotland as a prelude to prophecy should be kept in mind in our inquiry. Long established traditions, paralleled in Greek times, attest that inhabitants of the otherworld had, and visitors there might gain, the gift of prophecy, and such beings were naturally made the mouthpieces of words of wisdom whenever their utterance seemed desirable to literary men.

If, as seems likely from the Celtic parallels, Blind Harry was old, withered and blind because he had disobeyed his otherworld mistress, and, having lived long in faery, was forced to resume the course of his natural years when re-entrance to that eternal realm was forbidden him, it was most natural for Dunbar to have the Dwarf of the Interlude announce identity with him, if only because of his physical appearance.‡ But there was evidently more in the situation than that. Visitors to faery and inhabitants of faery were both faery folk, and as such were inevitably confused in the popular mind. While mortal visitors to faery might

be left on earth in the condition of extreme age, the immortal inhabitants of faery were sometimes dwarfs by nature, and sometimes assumed the shape of dwarfs for purposes of their own. If mortals who for a time had put on immortality and become possessed of faery skill, sang and prophesied when they returned from their otherworld life, albeit perhaps afflicted with blindness and physically weak, immortals in pigmy size or of the pigmy realm sang and prophesied on earth as they desired. Merlin, we remember, who could change his semblance at will, and sometimes took the form of a dwarf, once visited Arthur's court as a blind minstrel, led by a little dog, and harped a Breton lay.*

Innumerable, indeed, are the dwarf minstrels of Celtic fable, and acquaintance with some is necessary for the illumination of our theme.

Perhaps the tiniest of them was Esirt, "chief poet, bard and rhymer" of the pigmy realm of the Lupracan. After offending his ruler King Jubhdan by moderate praise, Esirt set out for Emania, where at the court of Fergus dwelt Aedh, Ulster's chief poet and man of science. Aedh could stand on full-sized men's hands, but Esirt had room enough on Aedh's palm. Fergus's men were disposed to be playful with Esirt, but the dwarf soon revealed such secret knowledge (of the sort Merlin

exhibited before Vortigern) that the King exclaimed: "Esirt, thou art in truth no child, but an approved man of veracity." Thereupon Esirt recited a poem he had composed in praise of Jubhdan and his land, and Fergus loaded him with gifts. Afterwards, Aedh accompanied his fellow-poet home, riding mysteriously on a hare over the seas. Jubhdan was put under bonds to come to Emania and when there showed himself also a superior poet and prophet. In a lay that Aedh indited about Jubhdan's faery palace these words occur: "Reciting of romances, of the Fian-lore, was there every day; singing of poems, instrumental music, the mellow blast of horns, concerted minstrelsy. A noble king he is: Jubhdan, son of Abhdaein, of the yellow horse; he is one whose form undergoes no change, and who needs not to strive after wisdom."*

Much more prominent among the sweet singers of Gaelic lore was one often mentioned in Ossianic verse, as for example, by Ossian in his Dialogue with St. Patrick: †

> Little Cnu, Cnu of my heart,
> The small dwarf who belonged to Fionn,
> When he chaunted tunes and songs,
> He put us into deep slumbers.

To Ossian the sound of Cnu's finger was dearer than "all the Saint's clerics in church and country." Caeilte, one of Ossian's last comrades, having

like him a supernatural span of years, was able to give St. Patrick an ample account of this same Cnu, surnamed Dereoil (Diminutive Nut), "the finest musician that was in either Ireland or Scotland," and from him we learn * that the cause of Cnu's leaving the faery realm, the land of the Tuatha de Danaan, was that "the other musicians were grown jealous of him." The first man that came his way after he emerged from the *sidh*, was Finn, who discovered the tiny fellow playing on a green (faery) mound, and welcomed him as a friend. It was "the third best windfall Finn ever had." The dwarf came to be "a spell in [Finn's] companionship." "The man's it was (and a stupendous gift) to gratify the whole world's throngs at once with minstrelsy"; but he did the Fianna, apparently, still greater service; "when evil awaited them, the dwarf would not conceal it from them." †

Still another very famous minstrel of the Tuatha de Danaan, was Cascorach, son of Cainchinn, who came out of the *sidh* of the Dagda's son, Bodhb Derg, with the interesting purpose "to acquire knowledge, and information, and lore for recital, and the Fianna's mighty deeds of valour, from Caeilte son of Ronan." Caeilte, who was now preternaturally old, heard with emotion Cascorach's request. "To his heed and mind Caeilte then recalled the losses of all those warriors and

great numerous bands among whom he had been; and miserably, wearily, he wept so that breast and chest were wet with him." Cascorach was a minstrel of marvellous skill and played with "a certain fairy cadence" so that even wounded men slept peacefully at the sound." Caeilte introduced him to St. Patrick, who asked him for a specimen of his musical art and craft. After hearing him play, the saint granted him the guerdon of Heaven and broke out into praise of minstrels and reciters of tales. "But for a twang of the fairy spell that infested it," he declared to his scribe Brogan, "nothing could more nearly than Cascorach's music resemble Heaven's harmony." Happily St. Patrick was represented as fond of Fian-lore, and the myths of ancient Erin.*

Finally, we may mention the marvellous Glasgerion of ballad fame,† who harped in the queen's chamber "till ladies waxed wood (mad)." Every stroke on his harp gladdened the heart of the king's daughter whose love he sought. He, of course, is "the Bret Glascurion," whom Chaucer speaks of in the *House of Fame* along with Arion and Chiron and mythical harpers of antiquity, and Gavin Douglas along with Orpheus in his *Palace of Honor*. The association of these four specially deserves our notice, for their likeness in fundamental nature is clear.

To them, mediaeval poets might have added Amphion, son of Zeus and Antiope, of whom it is said that when he played his lyre the stones not only moved of their own accord to the place where they were wanted, but fitted themselves together so as to form the wall. Different accounts represent him as receiving his lyre from Hermes, Apollo, or the Muses.

But most instructive perhaps of such parallels between Greek and Celtic fable regarding mythical harpers is that concerning Orpheus, the "tuneful bard," the son of Apollo and the muse Calliope, who performed marvels of minstrelsy. It was not without reason that the story of Orpheus and Eurydice was made over into a Breton lay, and infused with the spirit of Celtic faery. In our time Fiona MacLeod has poetically emphasized the likeness of Orpheus's effort to conduct Eurydice from the nether world with the story of Ossian.* "I have wondered often," he says, "if the ancient Gaelic tale of Oisin and Niamh — the later-life tale of the Son of Fionn and his otherworld love, in the days of his broken years and gathered sorrows — has not in it the heart of the old Greek story. . . . For Oisin, too, went to the otherworld to gather love, and to bring back his youth; but even as Orpheus had to relinquish Eurydice and youth and love, because he looked to take

away with him what Aidôneus had already gathered to be his own, so Oisin, the Orpheus of the Gael, had to come away from the place of defeated dreams, and see again the hardness and bitterness of the hitherworld, with age and death as the grey fruit on the tree of life. . . . Oisin did not dwell evermore in the pleasant land whither his youth had gone and he to seek it, but came back to find the world grown old, and all he loved below the turf, and the taunts of the monks of Patrick in his ears, and the bell of Christ ringing in the glens and upon the leas. Nor does any know of his death, though the Gaels of the North believe that he looked his last across the grey seas from Drumadoon in Arran, where that Avalon of the Gael lies between the waters of Argyll and the green Atlantic wave."

How much it must have meant for Blind Harry to have been " long in faery "!

CHAPTER V

Imaginary Bards

My locks were not then so grey;
Nor trembled my hands with age.
My eyes were not closed in darkness;
My feet failed not in the race!
Who can relate the deaths of the people?
Who the deeds of mighty heroes?"

Macpherson

THE *Dwarf's Part of the Play* introduced us to Amergin and Taliessin, two of the most famous Celtic bards, both of whom were connected with invisible powers and gained their skill thereby. Merlin, the great prophet of Wales (begotten by an incubus and himself the consort of a fay) was similarly allied with the otherworld. These three, as well as Aneurin, Llewarch Hen and others of their sort less well known,* unprejudiced scholars have at last come to perceive, were mythical personages; and yet they were credited with the composition of extant poems written, as Celtic specialists affirm, in far more recent epochs than those in which the authors were said, even by euhemerizing or otherwise ingenious annalists, to have flourished — the majority not before the twelfth century.†

From primal days, indeed, it was a common thing for British poets to father their own productions upon early celebrities, and even throughout the Middle Ages mythical persons like Thomas Rhymer, as well as real persons like Bede and Thomas à Becket, were represented as the spokesmen of prophecies concocted centuries after they were supposed to, or did actually live. Ancient worthies, moreover, were frequently called up from "the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller [ordinarily] returns" to convey news to mortals; and, curiously enough, St. Patrick and other saints were made to play a large part in this means of perpetuating pagan lore and giving it credence.* Hymns were attributed to Patrick, as also to Columba, and a vision to Adamnan, which they could not have composed. Patrick was said to have codified the Brehon laws, much as old proverbs were put into the mouth of King Alfred, another lawgiver.

In an old Irish narrative, where "varying" like Blind Harry's is given as the explanation of a hero's ability to authenticate information and prophecy, occurs a good example of a shape-shifter of supernaturally prolonged life who became an informant regarding past days and a credited seer. Tuan Mac Cairill,† after one hundred years as a man, is said to have changed his shape many times during

the next three centuries and more. Finally he was caught as a salmon and eaten by Cairell's wife, was born of her, and grew up with a long memory and superhuman insight. When he was of great age, he was baptized by St. Patrick. At the request of the sixth-century Irish saint Finnen of Moville, who preached the gospel in Ulster, Tuan, then a hermit, told the Christians the story of his life and transformations (reciting poems of his own composition) and all the history of Ireland. "There they stay a week conversing together. Every history and every pedigree that is in Ireland, 't is from Tuan, son of Cairell, the origin of that history is. He had conversed with Patrick before them, and had told him; and he had conversed with Colum Cille, and had prophesied to him in the presence of the people of the land."

The *Leabhar Gabhala*, or Book of Conquests,* which contains the Irish ethnologic legends, declares that these were preserved by an early settler Fintan, who had lived before the Flood and had been miraculously preserved in order that the memory of the events should not be lost. He was baptized by St. Patrick and gave him an account of everything he remembered himself.

In the Irish tract called *The Champion's Ecstasy*,† the faery prince Lug is said to have appeared to Conn of the Hundred Battles (put by the annal-

ists at A.D. 177), carried him off in a magic mist to a wonderful abode, and there informed him of the future history of Ireland, the length of his reign, and the names of his successors for many centuries afterwards. Concerning Conn's experience Nutt remarks:* "It is instructive to note how in the early tenth century the personages and scenery of the otherworld were thus used as convenient machinery for the fabrication of a prophecy, which doubtless owed its origin to the anxiety of some Northern poet to bolster up the claim of the race of Niall to the head kingship of Ireland. Instructive also that, whilst the story-teller makes no attempt to radically modify the primitive pagan character of these beings, he is yet anxious to bring them within the Christian fold by representing them as sons of Adam, clear proof that the process of transforming the inmates of the ancient Irish Olympus into historic kings and warriors had already begun."

Here we may also recall how the great hero Cuchulinn, son of Lug, prince of faery, "after being nine fifty years in the grave," was awakened by St. Patrick, to help him to convert Laegaire mac Neill, King of Ireland, to the true faith. Laegaire (Leary) would not be persuaded until he heard Cuchulinn tell of his great deeds, amongst others his expedition to Scath, 'the shadowy world.'

Perhaps more interesting for our purpose is the tradition of the recovery of the *Táin bó Cuálgne*, the most celebrated epic of ancient Ireland, in which Cuchulinn's deeds are narrated. * " Two different versions of the legend, one pagan and one Christian, exist. According to the first account, which is preserved in the Book of Leinster, Senchan Torpeist, chief poet and *filé* of Erin about the year 598 A.D., called a meeting of the bards and story-tellers of Erin to ascertain whether any of them could recollect the whole of the *Táin bó Cuailgne*. They confessed that they remembered only fragments, and he then sent away two of their body to the East to seek an old book called *The Cuilmenn* long since carried away out of Ireland, which was said to contain the whole story of the *Táin*. Setting forth, the young bards arrive, on their journey, at the grave of Fergus mac Rôich at Magh Aei in Roscommon, and, seating himself on the tomb, one of them addressed to the spirit of Fergus a lay of his own composing. Suddenly he found himself enveloped in a heavy mist, and Fergus himself appeared to him in all his old dignity and splendor, and, during a space of three days, he related to him from beginning to end the Progress of the *Táin*. . . . According to [the second, or Christianized] version, Fergus appears in response to the prayers of the chief saints of Ireland collected for this pur-

pose around his tomb. St. Cieran of Clonmacnoise, who was present at the recital, is said to have written down the tale from beginning to end on a fine vellum manufactured from the skin of his favorite dun cow, hence called the *Leabhar na hUidhre*, or *Book of the Dun Cow*. Having offered up thanksgiving, the saints retire, and Fergus returns to his tomb." *

A similar contrast between a heathen and a Christian version of a legend of poetic inspiration is present, on the one hand, in the Old Norse story of the shepherd Halbjorn Hali, who waited at the grave of Thorleif until that skald rose and instructed him how to compose a song in his memory, whereafter Halbjorn sang many songs in praise of princes; and, on the other hand, in the Anglo-Saxon story of the herdsman Cædmon, who was instructed by an angel how to compose a song of Creation, whereafter he dictated various Biblical narratives in the monastery of Whitby, as Bede relates. Cædmon is still reputed the first of Anglo-Saxon poets, though he has now been shorn of all the various epics with which he was once credited.

We can see better why Blind Harry was represented as the author of a poem dealing with events that occurred some two hundred years before when we recognize that it was a persistent habit of Celtic story-tellers to state that mortal visitors to faery

recounted deeds of former days of which they had first-hand knowledge.* As early as in the *Voyage of Bran* we find the artistic motivation of the many tales of ancients by ancients. After Bran's companion Nechtan had suffered the penalty of decrepitude for disobedience to faery command, Bran sang a quatrain rebuking his folly. " Thereupon," we read, " to the people of the gathering Bran told all his wanderings from the beginning until that time, and he wrote these quatrains [describing his voyage] in ogam, and then bade them farewell, and from that hour his wanderings are not known."

Even as Bran is pictured as telling later kinsmen of his voyage to the otherworld, confirming what was in their ancient stories, so the poet of the *Lay of Ossin*,† for artistic ends, represents Ossian as recounting to St. Patrick the circumstances of his journey to Tir na nOg, after the hard battle of Gabhra, when many of the Fianna were slain. In particular, we read of the attitude of the men of Erin when he came back after his long absence.

On my coming, then, into the country,
I looked closely in every direction,
I thought then in truth
That the tidings of Fionn were not to be found.

'T was not long for me nor tedious,
Till I saw from the west approaching me
A great group of mounted men and women,
And they came into my presence. . . .

I myself asked then of them,
Did they hear if Fionn was alive,
Or did any one else of the Fianna live,
Or what disaster had swept them away ?

" We have heard tell of Fionn,
For strength, for activity, and for prowess,
That there never was an equal for him
In person, in character, and in mien.

" There is many a book written down,
By the melodious sweet sages of the Gaels,
Which we, in truth, are unable to relate to thee,
Of the deeds of Fionn and of the Fianna.

" We heard that Fionn had
A son of brightest beauty and form,
That there came a young maiden for him
And that he went with her to the ' Land of Youth.' "

" Ossian Dall, blind Ossian," we have it on good authority, was, a century ago in Scotland, " a person as well known as strong Sampson or wise Solomon. . . . Ossian, ' *an deigh nam fiann,*' is proverbial to signify a man who has had the misfortune to survive his kindred." * This is the chief reason why he became the mouthpiece of so many Gaelic lays and tales of the Fians. Were not the deeds of old heroes indubitable when told by themselves or their contemporaries ?

In Ireland, Ossian's companion Caeilte attained greater fame than he as a poet and narrator of past events.† Caeilte it is who communicates to St.

Patrick the great body of old lore in the *Colloquy of the Elders.** Thus that precious anthology begins: "When the battle of Comar, the battle of Gowra, and the battle of Ollarba had been fought, and after that the Fianna for the most part were extinguished, the residue of them in small bands and in companies had dispersed throughout all Ireland, until at the point of time which concerns us there remained not any but two good warriors only of the last of the Fianna: Ossian, son of Finn, and Caeilte, son of Crunnchu, son of Ronan † (whose lusty vigor and power of spear throwing were now dwindled down) and so many fighting men as with themselves made twice nine."

Ossian and Caeilte set out together in search of hospitality, but after three days separated; Ossian went to his mother Blái in the *sídh* of Ucht Cleitigh (for she was of the faery folk), while Caeilte with his band by chance met St. Patrick and his clerks. The saint asked a favor of Caeilte, to show him a certain well, and then questioned him particularly about the ancients. "Success and benediction! Caeilte," he finally exclaimed: "all this is to us a recreation of spirit and of mind, were it only not a destruction of devotion and a dereliction of prayer." But Patrick's two guardian angels appeared to him and set at rest his fear that it might not be proper for him to be listening to stories of

the Fianna. "With equal emphasis, and concordantly, the angels answered him: 'holy cleric, no more than a third part of their stories do those ancient warriors tell, by reason of forgetfulness and lack of memory; but by thee be it [such as it is] written on tabular staffs of poets, and in ollaves' words; for to the companies and nobles of the latter time to give ear to these stories will be for a pastime." Whereupon the angels departed. St. Patrick thereafter sought sedulously to elicit all the lore that Caeilte had in memory. Here we have the framework for the great corpus of Fenian tales concerning the elders and, what was also important, full authority for their authenticity; Caeilte was one of the elders himself, supernaturally maintained alive with but a few others of his clan.

In the *Book of the Dun Cow* is recorded how Caeilte came from the dead to help King Mongan to establish the truth of his version of old events against that of the bard Forgoll,* who had threatened to satirize Mongan and his family with lampoons and bespell his land.† Caeilte advances to the court through the air and presents convincing evidence of his own participation in the event under discussion, thus rescuing Mongan from his predicament. Mongan appears from this story to have been a reincarnation of Finn mac Cumhail. After a lapse of several centuries, Finn was born

again into the world, retaining the memory of his past existence.

Fergus was formerly chief of those poets at Finn's court in whom was "knowledge and the gift of prophecy." In the remarkable story of *The Little Brawl at Almhain*,* this "sapient, trenchant-worded poet, the richly rewarded good man of verse," plays a conspicuous part. "Fergus True-lips, Finn's poet and the Fianna's, rose and before Finn son of Cumall sang the songs and lays and sweet poems of his ancestors and forbears. With the rarest of all rich and costly things Finn and Ossian, Oscar and mac Lughach, rewarded the bard wondrously; whereat he went to Goll mac Morna and in front of him recited the *bruidhne* or 'Forts,' the *toghla* or 'Destructions,' the *tána* or 'Cattle-liftings,' the *tochmarcha* or 'Wooings,' of his elders and progenitors: by operation of which artistic efforts the sons of Morna grew jovial and of good cheer." It would not have been surprising if this had been the Fergus who was called up from the otherworld to recite the surpassing *Táin*.

Even the famous Finn, father of Ossian and Fergus, was represented as a poet, and various fragments of verse and prophecies, among the oldest productions in Irish, are attributed to him.† "He was a king," said Caeilte, "a seer, a poet; a lord with a manifold and great train; our magi-

cian, our knowledgeable one, our soothsayer." * Of the conditions of service in Finn's company, we are informed: " Not a man was taken until he were a prime poet versed in the twelve books of poesy,† a curious qualification," as Rhŷs remarked knowingly, " for membership in a body which some speak of as the 'militia of ancient Erinn.' " " Two hundred years in flourishing condition and thirty more free of debility (a lengthy term) were Finn's existence; which brought him to the point at which he perished in taking 'the leap of his old age.' " ‡ Finn, tradition affirms, rests in this or that hill in the Highlands, and is expected back.

It will suffice here to add a few sentences of comment by Alfred Nutt:

" No one at the present day contends that the poems ascribed to Finn, to Oisin, to Cailte, and to Fergus are the compositions of these personages, or are anything else than scraps of a saga, related by means of narratives put into the hero's mouth descriptive of adventures in which he had taken part." §

" One can hardly fail to be struck by the kinship of tone between the Gaelic poems ascribed to Oisin, and the Welsh ones ascribed to Llywarch Hen. In both cases the reputation of poet is simply due to the semi-dramatic nature of the composition.

Both Oisin and Llywarch Hen were regarded as fit personages in whose mouths to place sentiments of a particular cast, and later ages finding this or that elegy or battle piece assigned to the Gaelic or Welsh prince naturally considered them as being the authors of the same. Oisin and Llywarch are both old and feeble, the last survivors of a mighty generation, savagely rebellious against the slings and arrows of outrageous age, bitterly mindful of the pride and lust of their youth." *

Blind Harry found ferlys in faery and returned in utter nakedness, though not (presumably) in entire forgetfulness, and trailing clouds of glory, from the otherworld where was " long " his home. We shall soon have more to say about the tone of the work that passes under his name and shall find that it was natural for a Fenian type of hero.

The Celtic works above mentioned remind one of what is perhaps the earliest Anglo-Saxon poem, *Widsith*, where a bard represents himself as a guest at the courts of various historical monarchs, some of whom lived centuries apart. He who " most of all men visited kindreds and nations " now in old age enumerates his wanderings, with the regular tone of regret of the ancient worthy who has outlived his kinsmen. " Many men and rulers I have known; through many stranger-lands I have fared, throughout the spacious earth, parted from

my kinsmen." His name, "Far-Traveller," and what he is made to say, indicate that he is merely a poetic representative of the wandering bard — a figure of fiction, yet more artificially created than Odin, alias Vegtamr, or Way-wont, of Old Norse myth. Odin, says Snorri, was "far-travelled." He was famed for his knowledge of past events.* *Wídsíth* is only a sketch, but it might have been made into a full *résumé* of Germanic epic history, and the would-be author's personality so particularized that he might reasonably have been regarded as an actual person. There was no good ground, of course, for the former belief of scholars that the real author was himself a far-traveller, and present discussion of the date of the poem on the basis of the references it contains seems curiously vain. We ought to remember that poets have indulged in such artistic fictions from the beginning of time, and for sufficient cause have opened the mouths of men of olden days to recite old tales which the poets had reshaped to gratify their audiences, according to the measure of their power.

It is hardly necessary to do more than allude to imaginary bards in classical tradition, such as Orpheus, of whom mention has already been made. As a result of his fabled descent into Hades, he had attributed to him, amongst other things, various descriptions of that region, which were spread

abroad by itinerant singers. Aristotle held that the poems known under Orpheus' name were fabricated partly by Cecrops and partly by Onomacritus. Who wrote them is unessential here. But we do need to bear in mind that Orpheus was simply a mythical figure like other Greek bards of repute, Musaeus, Olen, Pamphos, Philammon, Eumolpus and Linus, not to mention such personages as Hyacinthus, Narcissus, Glaucus, Adonis and Maneros, who eventually came to be considered as the authors of the dirges in which their memory was celebrated. In the same mythical class are the seers Melampus, Mopsus, Calchas, Amphiaraus, Helenus and Cassandra, in whose names many wonderful words were once spoken.

More important for us is the blind Demodocus, whom Homer represents as singing of men's glorious deeds in the hall of Alcinous, and to him makes wise Odysseus say:* "I praise you beyond all mortal men, whether your teacher was the Muse, the child of Zeus, or was Apollo. With perfect truth you sing the lot of the Achaeans, all that they did and bore, the whole Achaean struggle, *as if yourself were there, or you had heard the tale from one who was.*" Here clearly we have a sufficient reason for putting ancient tales into the mouth of an ancient bard: he might reasonably be pictured as having been in the old struggles himself, or as

hearing the tale from one who was. He might even be represented as the son of a muse, as Thamyris was of Erato, Linus and Orpheus of Calliope, Hyacinthus of Clio. Homer himself was said by some to be the son of a nymph; likewise Ossian was the son of a faery lady from the *sidh*. As is well known, a large number of cyclic poems and hymns (preludes), in addition to the *Margites* and the *Battle of the Frogs and Mice*, went under the name of Homer, which could not be by the author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Similar use was made of Demodocus' as of Homer's name. Later writers who look upon this mythical minstrel as an historical person, describe him as a native of Corcyra, and as an aged and blind singer, who composed poems on the destruction of Troy and the marriage of Hephaestus and Aphrodite. Plutarch refers to the first book of an epic poem by him on the exploits of Heracles. But critics do not now take these statements seriously; and whatever poems may have existed under his name, they are apt to denounce as "forgeries."

Forgery, however, is scarcely the proper word to use in such cases, though it is constantly so employed. No obloquy need rest upon an author who seeks anonymity by attributing his work to a mythical bard.

There were, of course, imaginary bards and bards who had imaginary experiences, just as some men, according to story, entered the otherworld in the body and some simply dreamt they had gone thither.

CHAPTER VI

The Mythical and the Actual Blind Harry

> Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
> Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
> Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
> Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
> Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
> That I will speak to thee. *Hamlet*

CAN we discover nothing more definite about the mythical Blind Harry, whose name the author of the *Wallace* seems to have chosen as an alias? If, as Dunbar asserts, he was descended from Finn mac Cumhaill, and all his congeners were Gaels, he cannot in the beginning have been called Harry. That must be an anglicized form of an original Gaelic name, or due to some confusion. An inquiry into this matter, though it may not yield certain results, is essential here, and will be seen to throw more light on conceptions of faery.

Blind Harry's father, according to Dunbar, was "mickle Gow mac Morn." The poet's statement that the son was "long" in faery implies that he was no permanent resident of the otherworld, but a mortal (fabled or real) who had resided there for an extended period of time. His blindness was ap-

parently not a self-imposed disguise, but an affliction he was obliged to endure. Thus, both his ancestry and his experience link him with Blind Ossian, also a son of Gow mac Morn.*

Under these circumstances, it is not going too far to suggest that Harry may be merely a corruption of Garry, for Celtic tradition has much to tell of a son of Gow mac Morn called Garaidh (Garry), which name in Scotland at the end of the fifteenth century, as we see from the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*,† was written phonetically in a form resembling Zarri, which the first editor regularly transcribed as Garry, and the latest Gairri. It may have been Garry with an aspirate, which is practically Harry. Aedh was the name of Gow mac Morn before he lost an eye, and was therefore called Gow (Goll, blind). Aedh, which means Fire, and is preserved in proper names like MacKay and Mackie, was frequently anglicized as Hugh.

Garadh mac Morn appears in Irish documents as a decrepit old man telling tales mournfully of the Fianna whom he has outlived: " And his condition this: that the major part of his life was past, and his kinsmen all were slain." He is represented as coeval with the fathers of a company of women whom he was left to serve and entertain while the men were away hunting. He could not accompany them, " because," as one of them says, " he is gone

off his lustihood and his spear throwing and because the condition in which he is, is that of old age." When the women call upon him to play chess he refuses, but instead " chants at them an old rhyme " of a chess-match of former days which begot a quarrel causing great slaughter of the Fianna. The incident is recorded, and the lay is summarized, by Caeilte in the *Colloquy of the Elders*,* to explain why a famous curative well at Cnoc na Rígh (Hill of the Kings), created by St. Patrick by striking a rock-wall with his staff, was named Garadh's Well. This Garadh was possibly identical or confused with the Guaire Goll, Blind Guaire, one of Finn's bearers of the chessboard, who is the leading figure of the story which the old minstrel tells, perhaps about himself. In any case, Garadh of the clan of Morna, and a brother-champion of Ossian, is well attested as a reciter of tales during his unhappy days of prolonged life; and, as he remarks significantly, " an ancient man without an ancient legend is amiss." St. Patrick blessed Caeilte for repeating his story because it was " grand lore and knowledge " — such as could evidently be obtained only from a man of an older age.

Whether or no Garadh mac Morn is to be identified with Guaire Goll,† Blind Guaire, it is worthy of attention that the latter appears as a reciter of old tales in another Erse narrative, preserved in

the twelfth-century manuscript *The Book of Leinster*, which recounts Finn's fearful struggle with phantoms * who " for their sister " sought vengeance on him in a lonely hunting-lodge in a glen — a tale showing such fundamental resemblance to the famous story of Wallace's visitation by the revengeful ghost of Fawdoun in Gask Hall,† one of the most picturesque sections in Blind Harry's poem, that we may surmise the author here followed a Highland narrative. Blind Guaire in this case, however, is only an alias for Ossian, as appears from the lines:

> Not " Guaire the Blind " was I called
> On the day we went at the king's call,
> To the house of Fiachu who wrought valor
> To the fortress over Badammar.

Which suggests the interesting question: Were Blind Harry and Blind Ossian regarded as mere variant names of the same mythical person ? They were at all events both represented alike as sons of Morn and denizens of faery, with supernaturally prolonged lives, while both Blind Guaire and Blind Ossian in extreme old age were tellers of former events.

" By one name was I never called since I went among peoples," Blind Odin (alias Hárr) declares in an Eddic poem,‡ and Snorri makes him enumerate fifty names he had adopted at one time or

another. "Then said Gangleri: 'Exceeding many names have ye given him; and, by my faith, it must be a goodly wit that knows all the lore and the examples of what chances have brought about each of these names.' Then Hárr made answer: 'It is truly a vast sum of knowledge to gather together and set forth fittingly. . . . Some occasions for these names arose in his wanderings; and that matter is recorded in tales. Nor canst thou ever be called a wise man if thou shalt not be able to tell of these great events.'" * Alas that we are not wise enough to tell even a small part of the great careers of Blind Odin, Blind Ossian, and their kind, in their varying forms!

It is an interesting fact that in Scotland the game of blindman's buff was called "Blin(d) Har(r)y," and that the same game was also called "Bellie Blin(d)," † for these once popular figures of fiction might have been thought to be alike. Now Billie Blin was the name of a well-known sprite whom Professor Child has confidently identified with Odin in one of his many manifestations. Odin, who often changed his shape, as well as his name, was wont to go about as a blind wayfarer, calling himself "Guest the Blind," "Blind the Bale-wise," or simply "Blind." Scottish ballads ‡ show acquaintance with this mysterious figure, and there is definite parallelism between one episode in

which he plays a part and certain episodes in Blind Harry's *Wallace*. To throw light on the character of Billie Blin as he appears in the ballad of *Earl Brand*, Professor Child thus summarized the situation in the Eddic lay of *Helgi Hundingslayer:* "Hunding and Helgi's family were at feud. Helgi introduced himself into Hunding's court as a spy, and when he was retiring sent word to Hunding's son that he had been there disguised as a son of Hagal, Helgi's foster-father. Hunding sent men to take him, and Helgi, to escape them, was forced to assume woman's clothes and grind at the mill. While Hunding's men are making search, a mysterious blind man, surnamed the bale-wise, or evil-witted (Blindr inn bölvísi), calls out, Sharp are the eyes of Hagal's maid; it is no churl's blood that stands at the mill; the stones are riving, the meal-trough is springing; a hard lot has befallen a war-king when a chieftain must grind strange barley; fitter for that hand is the sword-hilt than the mill-handle. Hagal pretends that the fierce-eyed maid is a virago whom Helgi had taken captive, and in the end Helgi escapes." Similarly, the author of the *Wallace* twice represents his hero as dressing up as a woman in order to escape from a dangerous plight. We have gone but a little way in the poem * when we read how Wallace, hard pressed by enemies, took shelter in a house near-by where a good-

wife succored him, dressed him in clothing of her own, "gaiff him a rok,* syn set him doun to spyn." The Southrons sought him busily in the house.

> Bot he sat still, and span full conandly,
> As of his tym, for he nocht leryt lang.

They left completely foiled. On another occasion,† Wallace is represented as escaping from his mistress's house clad in her clothes, his "burly brand" hidden underneath. This time, two of his enemies suspected him as he passed; he seemed to them "a stalwart quean." They followed, but when at a safe distance Wallace turned and slew them both.

In the Eddic lay that tells how Helgi did domestic work in woman's clothes, the secret is revealed by Blind Balewise, Blind Odin in his vindictive mood. Odin had two sides to his nature, represented by the appellatives given him,‡ Bil-eygr and Böl-eygr, the mild-eyed and the evil-eyed. Both "bil" and "bale" appear in the actions of Billie Blin, the blind sprite, gifted with "unco" insight and prescience, who gave shrewd counsel to men.

In the ballad of *King Arthur and King Cornwall* § the Billie Blin (Burlow Beanie) is a loathly fiend in the service of the otherworld King Cornwall, who spies on the Arthurian pilgrims. He is

shut up in a " wall of stone " (which indicates that he is a dwarf) and he reveals all the secrets of his master, the magician, to the latter's complete discomfiture.

Billie Blin and Blind Balewise are kindred figures and gave their names to types of uncanny beings, mentioned by scholars together, who were apt to appear among men and reveal secrets. They went about quite naked, and were regarded as fiends.* Blind Harry, we recall, was naked, and Old Harry was a popular Scotch name for the devil.†

We read of friendly household spirits, like " the drudging goblin " in *L'Allegro*, the lubbar-fiend who works more than ten laborers by day, and at night " basks at the fire his hairy ‡ strength," and also of mischievous, roguish goblins, like the naked Robin Goodfellow, who delight in frightening and perplexing people by their cries. But all spirits of the air were held to be dangerous.

Polwart, in his last flyting exclaims:

> Leaue boggles, brownies, gyr-carlings and gaists:
> Dastard, thou daffes, that with such divilrie mels.§

Mediaeval Scots, however, were keen about " such divilrie," in fiction at least. Sir David Lyndsay, as we have seen, amused his King by " pleasant stories of the Red Etin and the Gyre Carling." The Red Etin was a mythical figure, a being of

supernatural strength, who in *Hind Etin* * appears as a pagan elf, making strange music; yet in some versions of that ballad his name is humanized into Young Akin, even Young Hastings! We have a Scottish poem of Dunbar's time concerning the Gyre Carling, a " wild, wilroun witch," the Hecate of Britain, which is written with robust humor in a vein very similar to that of the Interlude.† The coarse performances of the Carling show that she was akin to the Dwarf's mother, truly, as she is called, a " devilish dame." When the *Wallace* was written, it must have been terribly hard to resist the crafts and assaults of the devil, he appeared in so many forms.

As a man of his time, the author naturally speculated about the spirit world. When he pictures his hero as terrified at seeing the Ghost of Fawdoun before the door, he makes the brave warrior cross himself for fear of evil.

> In till his hart he was gretlye agast.
> Rycht weill he trowit that was no spreit of man;
> It was sum dewill, at sic malice began.

The poet was no scoffer at ghosts. He exclaims in person:

> Traistis rycht weill all this was suth in deide,
> Suppose that it no poynt be of the creide.
> Power thai had witht Lucifer that fell,
> The tyme quhen he partyt fra hewyn to hell.

Commonly in Shakespeare's time, men felt there were " wicked " ghosts who had powers to blast a mortal, tempting spirits who could assume different forms and draw one into madness. Horatio knew well of these. But he knew too of " honest " ghosts, who came to earth to benefit the land they left, and he addressed the spirit of Hamlet's father:

> If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
> Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
> O speak!

The author of the *Wallace* believed that something was rotten in the state of Scotland, and he not only brought Thomas Rhymer on the scene to predict Wallace's glorious career, but also conjured up the ghost of St. Andrew, making him appear to the hero in a dream at Monkton Kirk.* Having said his paternoster, ave, and creed, Wallace falls asleep suddenly, when an aged man approaches, gives him a gleaming sword, and takes him to the top of a high mountain, where he leaves him alone. The hero sees a felon fire burning throughout the land. But soon a queen descends to him illumined with so great light that she puts the fire from his sight, gives him a wand of red and green, blesses his face and eyes with a sapphire, and then addresses him. She chooses him, she says, as her love; he is granted by God to help people suf-

fering wrong; let him take redress and he shall have lasting bliss. She gives him a book and ascends out of his sight. As Wallace reads this book, he comes back to consciousness, and seeks Master John to interpret the vision. Blair explains that it is St. Andrew who has given him the sword and shows him the symbolism of the other details. Whether the lady was Fortune or Our Lady, he could not surely tell, but he deemed it probable she was Our Lady.*

The distinction between pagan and Christian visitants was, indeed, hard to define, and no strict lines were drawn. The faery queen who appeared to Thomas Rhymer was confused with the Virgin, and the Virgin takes the place of some otherworld lady in a remarkable account of how Thomas à Becket got the gift of prophecy.†

Just as Celtic thoughts of faery were always tinged by Christian ideas, so paganism strongly infected Christian views of the supernatural. The early Church did not refuse to believe in spirits that haunt the air, and influence men for good or ill. Ecclesiastics argued learnedly about demoniacal possession. They used belief in the otherworld to instruct men in the proper tenets of the faith. Mortals were readily depicted by them as visiting purgatory, or hell, or paradise, to learn the truth of Biblical teaching. They brought back messages

from the great beyond, and were urged as guides to their fellows by reason of their superhuman experience. By the aid of Divine powers they became prophets of political events.

Thus prototypes in classical and Biblical lore, known to scholars, as well as the common example of ecclesiastics who invented visions of the future, plainly encouraged a practice which often led to imposture. "It would seem," says Sir Walter Scott,* speaking of the legend of Thomas Rhymer, "that the example which it afforded of obtaining the gift of prescience, and other supernatural powers, by means of the fairy people, became the common apology of those who attempted to cure diseases, to tell fortunes, to revenge injuries, or to engage in traffic with the invisible world, for the purpose of satisfying their own wishes, curiosity, or revenge, or those of others. Those who practised the petty arts of deception in such mystic cases, being naturally desirous to screen their own impostures, were willing to be supposed to derive from the fairies, or from mortals transported to fairyland, the power necessary to effect the displays of art which they pretended to exhibit."

This is an illuminating statement of facts fundamental to our inquiry. But let us carefully distinguish the kind of imposture of which Sir Walter speaks from that which he himself employed in

his *Minstrelsy* when he imaginatively represents Thomas Rhymer as singing during a feast at Ercildoun of King Arthur and various knights of the Table Round.

> True Thomas rose, with harp in hand,
> When as the feast was done:
> (In minstrel strife, in Fairy Land,
> The elfin harp he won.)
>
> Hushed were the throng, both limb and tongue,
> And harpers for envy pale;
> And armed lords leaned on their swords
> And hearkened to the tale.

Naturally Sir Walter, since he had edited the Middle-English romance of *Sir Tristrem* attributed to Thomas, made the old man from faery sing especially of Tristram and Ysolde.

> Their loves, their woes, the gifted bard
> In fairy tissue wove.

This was, he conceives, the minstrel's last song on earth, for he must needs return to fairyland at the sight of a snow-white hart and hind. Never again was he seen " in haunts of living men," and never will reappear—until another Scott wishes a mouthpiece for a tale of olden time!

Again, in *Redgauntlet*, Sir Walter puts an uncanny tale into the mouth of a strange blind minstrel called Wandering Willie, who reminds us of Billie Blin. " He commenced his tale accordingly,

in a distinct narrative tone of voice, which he raised and depressed with considerable skill; at times sinking almost into a whisper, and turning his clear but sightless eyeballs upon my face, as if it had been possible for him to witness the impression which his narrative made upon my features." Most noteworthy are the words that the author, who knew as much as any one of his time about demonology and witchcraft, especially as it was illustrated by Gaelic belief, makes this blind minstrel speak: " Honest folks like me! How do ye ken whether I am honest or what I am ? I may be the deevil himsell for what ye ken, for he has power to come disguised like an angel of light; and, besides, he is a prime fiddler."

When Sir Walter in these latter days used Thomas Rhymer as the mouthpiece of Arthurian fable, and Blind Willie as the mouthpiece of a Border tale, he was acting in a very similar way to the author of the *Wallace* when he chose Blind Harry to voice his fictions about a former champion of Scottish rights.

Whoever Blind Harry was among the ancients, he was reputed in the poet's time to have been long in faery, where he experienced marvels. Such a person, having penetrated mysteries hidden to common men, would naturally be regarded by them with awe, and listened to with unfeigned re-

spect, heeded, like the Ghost of Guy or St. Andrew, as one who had risen from the dead, like True Thomas or Ossian, as one who had tasted of immortality, in possession therefore of supernatural insight and knowledge, believed amply when he spoke either of the past or the future.

It appears, then, that the author of the *Wallace* had good grounds for choosing Blind Harry as his pseudonym. It was as apt as Theophilus Insulanus, which was used by a Macleod who wrote a treatise on second sight (Theophilus being the mediaeval Faust), or Robin Goodfellow, who in 1590 published the *News out of Purgatory* by his "old companion" Richard Tarlton. This latter book has sometimes been attributed to Thomas Nash, but whether or no he is the author, certainly Tarlton the actor (†1588) had as little to do with it as St. Patrick with the Purgatory that went under his name, or Tundalus with the Vision with which he was credited. But Robin Goodfellow was an elfin spirit and served very well as a pseudonym for one who wished to convey news out of purgatory.

It is time now to consider an actual Blind Harry who has regularly been identified with the mythical figure that appears in the Interlude and with the Blind Harry mentioned as a poet in Dunbar's *Lament for the Makers*.

One " Blind(e) Hary " is mentioned on five occasions in the Treasurer's Accounts, during the years 1489–1491, as the recipient of small sums of money, varying from five to eighteen shillings, but without any indication whatever as to his station or the reason for the rewards.* The only remark in connection with his name is the entry twice " at the King's command." Critics have found confirmation of the view that this Blind Harry was a minstrel in the fact that other persons of a minstrel character were similarly mentioned at or about the same time in the Accounts. There was, however, no system in the entries, and gifts to all sorts of persons were jumbled together. To judge only from the immediately adjoining context, he might have been a cobbler, a gunner, a courier, an usher, or a trumpeter, quite as well as a minstrel. All that we can safely assert on the basis of these official documents is that a person called Blind Harry was frequently in the King's employ in some subordinate position during the years mentioned. Apart from his name, there is nothing whatever, then, to connect this person with the author of the *Wallace*, and, considering how small are the gifts and how little is said of him, one would be justified in regarding him as an entirely distinct individual, either a mere hanger-on at court actually named Harry and blind, or one who bore the sobriquet

Blind Harry as an assumed or familiar name. As Professor Kittredge reminds me, there were various historical persons who were called Adam Bell, Friar Tuck and Robin Hood. Professor Child points out no less than six Robin Hoods between 30 Edward I and 10 Edward III, a period of less than forty years.*

If, however, the actual Blind Harry of the records was indeed the Wallace-poet, that need cause no difficulty about our regarding his name as a mere pseudonym. In the Treasurer's Accounts for about the same period in which Blind Harry appears, are recorded several gifts to one Stobo, evidently the "maker" of that name to whom Dunbar alludes:

> And he has now tane, last of aw,
> Gud gentill Stobo et Quintyne Schaw,†
> Of quham all wichtis hes pite.

Several entries in the Accounts witness that, like Blind Harry, Stobo was rewarded "at the King's command," sometimes without mention of his employment, sometimes for particular services, such as writing letters, or issuing proclamations.‡ In one case the King bought a horse from him, and in another gave him £10 for a ring and chain, which he took from him to give to a visitor. Stobo was one of the King's clerks, and we have a valuable docu-

ment concerning him in the Exchequer Rolls, from which it appears that, on March 25, 1474, James III, by a charter under the Great Seal, granted him a pension of £20 yearly, in consideration of his clerical services.* But this entry in the Rolls refers to him as "John Reide, *alias* Stobo," and Stobo, it has been made clear, was only another name for a well-known churchman and notary, Sir John Reid, yet one which he bore so commonly that in the accounts no explanation of his identity was needed, any more than would have been a payment in our time to Buffalo Bill, Melba, or Mark Twain. Thus one of the clerks of the King's household, while Blind Harry was also there, one of the poets lamented by Dunbar along with Blind Harry, is mentioned in the Treasurer's Accounts and in Dunbar's poem under his assumed or familiar name only.†

Assumed or familiar names, in truth, were common in Great Britain in the fifteenth century. In 1497, for example, according to the Treasurer's Accounts, nine shillings were paid to two fiddlers who sang *Gray Steil* to James IV when he was holding court at Stirling, and we have evidence that the story of *Eger and Grime*, in which the mythical personage of that name was celebrated, was popular in the circles in which the Wallace-poet lived.

But this name Gray Steel was affectionately applied by James V to Archibald Douglas of Kilspendie. From Hume of Godscroft's history of the family of Douglas, we learn that the King, when he was young, loved Archibald "singularly well, for his ability of body, and was wont to call him Gray Steill." William, first Earl of Gowrie, also was given this name, perhaps for another cause, because the Gray Steel of romance owed his power to his being a magician of the "forbidden-country," and Gowrie, according to Spottiswood, "was too curious, and said to have consulted with wizards." * Furthermore, according to Dempster,† the poet Alexander Montgomery, "the Scottish Pindar," went by the sobriquet (*vulgo vocatus*) "Eques Montanus," the Highland Trooper.‡

A fellow-clerk of "gud, gentill Stobo" in the Secretary's office was Walter Chepman, one of the firm of Chepman and Myllar, the first printers of Scotland. Chepman seems to have been in the service of James IV during the whole of his reign. He and Myllar received a letter granting them an exclusive privilege of printing, on September 15, 1507, and one of the first books they issued was Blind Harry's *Wallace*. No doubt the publishers knew who the poet was. It is probable that when his book was written there were many persons in

the secret, if secret it was. But it was to no Scot's advantage to discuss the authorship of the work publicly, and the real name of the writer became so soon disassociated from the poem as never to have reached the ears of Major, who knew only that he was called Blind Harry.

CHAPTER VII

The Real Author of the Wallace

He was a man of middle age;
In aspect manly, grave, and sage,
As on king's errand come;
But in the glances of his eye
A penetrating, keen, and sly
Expression found its home.

Marmion

TO all intents and purposes the *Wallace* is an anonymous book; but we can now speculate much more intelligently than ever before regarding the rank and character of the real author, since we need no longer treat his poem as the work of an abnormal, afflicted man. Forgetting, then, if possible, all that has been written about the poor old wandering minstrel of the critics' imagination, let us examine the *Wallace* just as we should any anonymous poem and seek from internal evidence to discover the qualities of the writer.

First, we naturally ask: what does he say of himself? Not much that is undisguised, it must be admitted, but a good deal that is worth attention. If any passage in the *Wallace* be autobiographical, it is the conclusion, where the poet emphasizes cer-

tain conditions under which he says he wrote, and appeals to his readers for their indulgence. In some twoscore lines, he here reaffirms that he had diligently followed a Latin book by the hero's chaplain Master Blair; gives new would-be proofs of the reliability of that fabulous work, from which he asserts he departed but once and then only under strong pressure on the part of certain knights, who on one point caused him to " make a wrong record "; dwells upon the value of advancing the fame of noble Wallace, whose good deeds it was " great harm " to blot; and bespeaks the gratitude of " worthy men " for his own conscientious efforts to that end; after which he indulges in the following envoy:

Go nobill buk, fulfillyt off gud sentens,
Suppos thow be baran of eloquens.
Go worthi buk, fulfillit off suthfast deid;
Bot in langage off help thow has greit neid,
Quhen gud makaris rang weill in to Scotland,
Gret harm was it that nane of thaim ye fand.
ȝeit thar is part that can the weill awance;
Now byd thi tym, and be a remembrance.
I yow besek, off your beneuolence,
Quha will nocht low, lak nocht my eloquence;
It is weill knawin I am a burel man,
For her is said as gudly as I can:
My spreyt felys na termys asperans.
Now besek God, that gyffar is off grace,
Maide hell and erd, and set the hewyn abuff,
That he ws grant off his der lestand luff.

These are the words of a clever, self-conscious, literary man, evidently intent on the impression his book is likely to make. He presents himself as particularly anxious to establish the truth of his matter ("though it be not pleasant to all") while extremely modest with regard to his own artistic power. Insisting that he feigned not for friendship or for foes, he ostentatiously proclaims his work to be merely a faithful record of facts.

In all his conclusion, it appears, the author was simply throwing dust in the eyes of credulous readers, to induce them the more willingly to follow his fictions. He was merely imitating the devices of that arch-impostor of the Middle Ages, Geoffrey of Monmouth, author of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, who with similar humility asserted his reliance solely on a mysterious book which he alone was privileged to possess, and with similar anxiety protested the soothfastness of his account, through it might not tally wholly with the information obtainable from other sources.

Geoffrey, like Blind Harry, wrote with a political purpose, hoping to arouse pride of independence and encourage a martial spirit in his land, and he was wise enough not to maintain that he was himself responsible for the perversion of past history that he presented. Writing in Latin, he declares that he had been given "a very ancient book in

the British tongue," which, in a continued regular story and elegant style, related the actions of all the kings of Britain from Brutus down. He claims that he got this book from one Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, and makes bold to dedicate his composition to Robert, Earl of Gloucester. " Of the matter now to be treated of, most noble Earl," so he begins his eleventh book, " Geoffrey of Monmouth shall be silent; but will, nevertheless, *though in a mean style*, briefly relate what he found in the British book above mentioned, and heard from that most learned historian, Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, concerning the wars which this renowned king [Arthur] upon his return to Britain after this victory, waged against his nephew." And he ends his work with a warning to his contemporaries, Caradoc of Llancarvan, William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, to be silent about the kings of the Britons, " since they have not that book written in the British tongue, which Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, brought out of Brittany, and which, *being a true history* published in honor of those princes, *I have thus taken care to translate.*"

Geoffrey, moreover, explains with engaging modesty that while in the midst of his history he was obliged to publish the prophecies of Merlin, who was then " the subject of public discourse," because urgently requested to do so by Alexander,

Bishop of Lincoln. He declares that he has merely translated Merlin's prophecies out of British into Latin and eagerly apologizes for his " low genius," entailing lack of polish and other faults. " Notwithstanding," he writes, " since the deference which is paid to your penetrating judgment will screen me from censure, I have employed my *rude pen* and *in a coarse style* present you with a translation out of a language with which you are unacquainted." *

With like-purposed solemnity the Wallace-poet affirms his veracity. " I haiff had blayme to say the suthfastnes," he exclaims in the midst of his work,† with the tone of a martyr, and again at its end appeals to his readers to be grateful to him for having spared no travail to arrive at the truth. His general asseverations as to the trustworthiness of his narrative are plainly make-believe. As to his particular statements linked with them, that he was promised no reward for his labor, that he had no " charge " from a king or other lord, that no man was bound to him for the " costs," — these are not capable of proof or disproof. Major takes up part of his preface to justify himself " in the eyes of those who pretend that it is not fitting to dedicate an historical work to any person, seeing that he who seeks for a patron must put on the mark of a flatterer rather than that of an historian, whose

first law is to write the truth "; and, if these words be not due to Blind Harry's, they may indicate that it was conventional at the time to disclaim the influence of a patron in order to establish the veracity of a narrative of events.

Yet in one particular point, Blind Harry goes out of his way to note, he "said amiss"; in one small matter he really did depart somewhat from Master Blair! His "autour" affirmed that Wallace took the crown one day on Allerton Moor, but two knights of the poet's acquaintance, the lords Wallace of Craigie and Liddell, made him put the matter in a different way.* This is a curious avowal; the poet might have altered the text if he felt he was wrong, for there is no evidence that the conclusion was not in the first form of his book. He doubtless consulted Wallace and Liddell about his material, as he asserts; but his statement looks as if it were chiefly pose to suggest his complete honesty, and to confirm the high authority of his "autour," Master Blair, whom he had come to recognize was never wrong, even when at variance with those of his contemporaries who ought best to know.†

In any case, we should observe, the poet *claims* collusion with contemporary lords in misshaping his story. He was undoubtedly shrewd and ingenious, like the Archdeacon Geoffrey, not simple-

spirited like Geoffrey's successor, the parish priest Layamon. He knew who was who in his day. His epilogue was written for effect.

Very innocently, too, like Geoffrey, he maintains a humble mien, disclaiming any literary merit of his own. "Blaym nocht the buk, set [though] I be wnperfyt," he implores his readers; it is only a "rurall dyt."* The work is "noble" and "worthy," but only because of its "good sentence;" he, the poet, was not of the old-time "gud makaris"; his language had great need of help; he lacked all eloquence; he must really beseech his readers for their "benevolence." The following words offer a clear example of mock modesty:

> It is weill knawin I am a burel man,
> For her is said as gudly as I can.
> My spreyt felis na termys asperans.

That passage alone ought to have sufficed to make everyone doubt the composition of the poem by any ignorant blind minstrel, not to mention Dunbar's naked dwarf. Its literary character leaps to the eyes. Nevertheless, critic after critic down to the present has seen fit to isolate the statement "I am a burel man," and use it as evidence that the author was of low degree. To do this argues, if not lack of candor, at least lack of acquaintance with early literature. What literary scholar but

ought to feel himself transported by the envoy straight into the realm of Chaucer, Lydgate, Hawes, the author of the *Court of Love*, Spenser, and many others ? Some at least, before seeing Mr. Brown's valuable comments on the passage,* had recalled in connection with it the words of the Franklin:

> But, sires, by-cause *I am a burel man*,
> At my bigynnyng first *I you biseche*
> *Have me excused of my rude speche;*
> I lerned never rethoryk certeyn;
> Thyng that I speke it moot be *bare and pleyn.*
>
> . . . . .
>
> *My spirit feleth noght* of swich matere
> But if you list, my tale shul ye here.†

Blind Harry almost certainly had this very passage in mind when he wrote, but, in truth, apologetic envoys like his were common among sophisticated writers, in Scotland as well as in England. I shall cite here but one, and that partly for another reason, from the *Quare of Jelusy*,‡ an elaborate poem, conjectured to have been written about 1480 by one of Blind Harry's immediate circle, Master James Auchinleck, " servitor " or secretary to the Earl of Ross, and at the time of his death (1497) chantor of Caithness in the Cathedral Church of Dornoch — the James Afflek noted, along with Master John Clerk, for " ballat-making

and tragedie," whom Dunbar bewails in his *Lament.* Near the beginning of the poem, we read: *

> And of my termes, and my rude endite,
> Excusith me, sett [though] thai be inperfyte,
> Beseking you at lovis hie reuerence;
> Takith gude will in stede of eloquence.

And again at the end:

> ȝou loueris all rycht hertly I exhort,
> This litill write helpith to support.
> Excusith it, and tak no maner hede
> To the endyte, for it most bene of nede,
> Ay simpill wit furth schewith sympilnese,
> And of vnconnyng cummith aye rudnese.
> But sen here ar no termes eloquent,
> Belevith the dyte, and takith þe entent.

The more carefully one compares this passage with that above quoted from the *Wallace*, the more evident it becomes that they follow the same literary convention. It is specially worthy of note, however, that the *Wallace* resembles the *Quare* in that it is written in a combination of heroic couplets and stanzas like those in Chaucer's *Anelida.* Such elegance was suitable to the *Quare* type of poem; it startles in a biography like the *Wallace.*

To indicate the similar character of the writing, as well as to illustrate the identical metre, a stanza from each of the poems is here given. From the *Quare:* †

Quho schall me help, allace! for to endite,
For to be waill, to compleyne, and to write
This vice, that now so large is and commoun ?
What sall I say ? quhom sall I awite ?
For hie, nor law, is non estate to quite!
Now all hath fele of thilke poysoun.
Allace! this false and wickit condicioun,
The lustyhede, and every glade delyte
Hath of þis world full nere ybroght a doun.

And this from the *Wallace*, the sixth of a series of twenty-one regarding the hero when a captive: *

Compleyn, Sanctis thus, as your sedull tellis;
Compleyn to hewyn with wordis that nocht fellis:
Compleyne your woice wnto the God abuffe;
Compleyne for him in to that sitfull sell is;
Compleyne his payne in dolour thus that duellis;
In langour lyis, for losyng of thar luff,
His fureous payne was felloune for to pruff.
Compleyne also, yhe birdis, blyth as bellis,
Sum happy chance may fall for your behuff.

Like the author of the *Quare*, the Wallace-poet had skill " to bewail, to complain, and to write." He knew all the gentle art of " enditing " with many a rhetorical question, such as " Quhat suld I mor of Wallace turment tell ? " and many an " Alas! " in the following fluent passage: †

Allace, Scotland, to quhom sall thou compleyn!
Allace, fra payn quha sall the now restreyn!
Allace, thi help is fastlie brocht to ground,
Thi [best] chyftane in braith bandis is bound!

Allace, thow has now lost thi gyd off lycht!
Allace, quha sall defend the in thi rycht?
Allace, thi payn approchis wondyr ner,
With sorow sone thow mon bene set in fyr!

And so on for another dozen lines!

All will agree that the author of the *Wallace* wrote with entire ease and competence in the artificial manner of courtly poets. The "high style" that he employs, of a type natural to such books as the *Quare* addressed to "Lovers," is evidently out of place in a realistic account of fierce war. But the inference as to the character of the poet is all the more important if his decoration is merely lugged in for show. He plainly belonged to a sophisticated group who aimed at literary display.

Being used, it would seem, to poetical ornaments, he was loth to forego them even in the *Wallace*. If he was not actually enamoured of current literary conventions, how else can we explain the hackneyed nature-preludes, astrological and mythological allusions, ruminations on Fortune, inveighing (with examples) against "coveitise," and the like, that, from our point of view, mar the book. Surely only a rhetorician would write of Wallace in balanced phrase:

Now want, now has; now loss, now can wyn;
Now lycht, now sadd; now blisful, now in baill;
In haist, now hurt; now sorouffull, now haill;

Nowe weildand weyle; now calde weddyr, now hett;
Nowe moist, now drowth; now wauerand wynd, now weit.
So ferd with hym for Scotlandis rycht ful ewyn,
In feyle debait vi ȝeris and monethis sewyn.*

"In frustyr [vain] termys I will nocht tary lang," the poet says directly after this outburst. He knew he was indulging in the very "eloquence" the lack of which, following convention, he asked his readers to excuse in his writing.

Professor Skeat and Mr. Brown † have pointed out plain borrowings from Chaucer on Blind Harry's part, and Mr. Brown in particular has shown how much he derived from the Knight's Tale and *Troilus*.‡ Professor Childs has further developed the point. That Blind Harry was a disciple of Chaucer, is an important fact to remember if we would estimate aright the value of certain "I" passages in the *Wallace*, to which we now turn. Recalling how Chaucer by convention asserted imperfection in the art of love, and declared he was far from the god of love's help "in derknesse," we shall not attach any autobiographical significance to the aside of Blind Harry after telling of his hero's welcome of the woman of St. Johnston in her chamber:

Quhat at thai wrocht, I can nocht graithly say;
Rycht wnperfyt I am of Venus play.§

It has not been hitherto noted, but it is certainly true, and deserves mention here, that the poet developed the story of Marian Bradfute * with that of Cressida in mind.

Another would-be personal reference, of which some critics have made a good deal, may be disposed of in the same way. In the Knight's Tale, after raising a question of foreknowledge, Palamon remarks: "*Th' answere of this I lete to divynis*," and the knight himself later inserts a remark regarding that hero dead:

> His spirit chaunged hous, and wente ther,
> As I cam never, I can nat tellen wher.
> Therefor I stinte, *I nam no divinistre;*
> Of soules finde I nat in this registre.
> Ne me ne list thilke opiniouns to telle
> Of hem, though that they wryten wher they dwelle.†

In the same fashion, as has already been remarked, Blind Harry raises the subtle question of Fawdoun's ghost, as difficult for Wallace as that of the ghost of Hamlet's father for Horatio, and, after some discussion of devils intent on malice, continues:

> Be sic myschieff giff his men mycht be lost,
> Drowynt or slayne amang the Inglis ost;
> Or quhat it was in liknes of Faudoun,
> Quhilk brocht his men to suddand confusioun;
> Or giff the man endyt in ewill entent,
> Sum wikkit spreit agayne for him present;

I can nocht spek of sic diuinite,
To clerkis I will lat all sic materis be:
Bot of Wallace, *furth I will yow tell.**

Just previous to this, after telling of Wallace's slaying of Fawdoun (a man, he had noted,† who was "melancholy of complexion"), Blind Harry paused to pass judgment in what might be regarded as an open question, saying with sober modesty:

Sum demys it to ill, and othyr sum to gud;
And I say her, into thir termys rude,
Better it was he did, *as thinkis me.*‡

"First," he begins as a logician, then goes on to state his argument, and concludes:

Mycht he do ocht bot tyne him as it was ?
Fra this questioun now schortlye will I pass,
Deyme as yhe lest, ye that best can and may;
I bot rahers as my autour will say.

Here Blind Harry clearly wrote with the Knight's Tale in mind. In a passage shortly after that in which appear the words "Th' answere of this I lete to divynis," we read:

Yow loveris axe I now this questioun,
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun ?
That oon may seen his lady day by day,
But in prison he moot dwelle alway.
That other wher him list may ryde or go,
But seen his lady shal he never-mo,
Now demeth as yow liste, ye that can,
For I wol telle forth as I bigan.§

The Knight's Tale, it has been recognized, is indeed fundamentally a tale of "questions." Chaucer even makes the plot hinge on a debate between Palamon and Arcite, a question of love-theory as to who best deserved Emelye.

> Greet was the stryf and long bitwixe hem tweye,
> If that I hadde leyser for to seye.*

In the Franklin's Tale, the question is openly stated in the final words:

> *Lordinges, this question wolde I aske yow,*
> Which was the moste free, *as thinketh yow?*
> *Now telleth me, er that ye ferther wende.*
> *I can na-more, my tale is at an ende.*

The Wallace-poet was similarly given to questions. A good example on his side is in the passage beginning "*At men off wit this questioun her I as(k),*" where he goes on to compare his hero with other nobles who fought against England, and ends

> Quhilk hald ye for the best?
> Rycht clayr it is to ransek this questioun:
> *Deyme as ye lest,* gud men of discrecioun;
> To my sentence breyffly will I pass.†

Still another question is posed in the extremely interesting stanza where the poet appeals to "all worthi men that has gud witt to waille" to judge in favor of Wallace as against Bruce.‡ The latter was indeed the "heir" of the kingdom and had the "right," but Wallace was "baulder in battaill"

and thrice saved the realm by his might ("right *vs.* might" in a new sense!). Which then was the better man to rule? The passage is as ingenious as mendacious, the thought at this point as subtle as the metre.

Blind Harry's questionings were merely imitative of Chaucer. He was no ecclesiastic, but he had a clerkly interest in disputation. He had, moreover, as many readers have observed with wonderment, considerable knowledge of antiquity, astrology, and mythology, and claimed to have drawn his material from a Latin book. Even though his asseverations on that subject are mere artifice, as will presently appear,* it is hardly credible that he should have made such a claim if he could not read Latin.† He may not have been a "gud makar," but he certainly had ambitions in that direction; he appealed openly to an audience of men of wit and discretion; he had "lerned retorik, certeyn."

Remembering that Chaucer based his *Troilus* on an Italian poem by Boccaccio, and not on a Latin work by "Lollius," as he claims, that he greatly amplified and altered his "auctor's" matter, that he was a "servant of Venus" all his days, and in the *Troilus* sought, with infinite care, using all the art he could master, to write a great poem of love, the following stanzas from the Prologue of the second book are instructive:

O lady myn, that called art Cleo,
Thou be my speed fro this forth, and my muse,
To ryme wel this book, til I have do;
Me nedeth her noon other art to use.
For-why to every lovere I me excuse,
That of no sentement I this endyte,
But out of Latin in my tonge it wryte.

Wherefore I nil have neither thank ne blame
Of al this werk, but pray yow mekely,
Disblameth me, if any word be lame,
For as myn auctor seyde, so seye I.
Eek though I speke of love unfelingly,
No wonder is, for it no-thing of newe is;
A blind man can nat juggen wel in hewis.

" Go, litel book," says Chaucer at the end of his great work, and " subgit be to alle poesye." " Go, nobill buk," says Blind Harry, with similar ambition. Chaucer was ready to " kiss the steps " of the supreme poets of antiquity, Blind Harry those of his supreme predecessor in Britain. Each dwelt on the " sentence " of his work, while sparing no pains to display art. The *Wallace* is one of the most careful and correct poems in Scots. That it is not more beautiful in form or feeling, is due merely to the limitations of the author's talent and temperament.

The *Wallace*, like the *Troilus*, ends with an appeal to God, Creator and giver of grace, in the name of heavenly love. But just before that, each poet mentions two of his contemporaries who

either have already corrected, or are asked to correct, the poem " ther nede is." We must assume that " moral Gower " and " philosophical Strode " knew perfectly well where Chaucer got the chief material of his poem, and that he had departed from his " auctor " as he had seen fit.* We have no record that they protested at his novelties, any more than William of Malmesbury and Caradoc of Llancarvan at Geoffrey of Monmouth's after he referred to these worthies in his new-found History. We may surmise that Blind Harry's reference to the knights Wallace and Liddell, who could well estimate the " originality " of his treatment of the war of independence, was conceived in a similar sly mood, and disarmed any protest they or others like them may have been inclined to make.

The Wallace-poet was eager to explain that he had no " charge " (commission) from any king or lord to write his book; that no one had promised him reward for his labor; that no one was bound to him for the costs of the undertaking. But he does not indicate that he would refuse consideration if it was offered. " Thar is part that can the(e) weill awance," he says suggestingly in his envoy, and seems there almost to be making an indirect plea for help, a sort of hinting complaint for (if not *to*) an empty purse. We recall Chaucer's envoy:

O conqueror of Brutes Albioun!
Which that by line and free eleccioun
Ben verray king, this song to you I sende;
And ȳe, that mowen al our harm amende,
Have minde up-on my supplicacioun.

And we wonder for what purpose the Wallace-poet indulged in long digressions in praise of noble persons, such as Sir John Ramsay:

Schir Jhon Ramsay, that rychtwys ayr was borne
Off Ouchterhous, and othir landis was lord,
And schirreff als, as my buk will record;
Off nobill blud, and als haill ancestre;
Contenyt weill with worthi chewalre.*

This is not the only passage where Blind Harry goes out of his way to praise noble persons. He was probably not above arranging things right for his friends, even though he was not "promised" reward. His much-protesting about not feigning "for friendship nor for foes" makes one suspicious. But it was only just, he may have argued, that he should praise those who "rabellit nocht contrar thair richtwis croun," † and any noble might well have been grateful to him, in a time when rebels and traitors were abroad, if that noble's ancestors were conspicuously placed among the loyalists in the great struggle against the invader.‡

Mr. Brown connected the praise of the Ramsays with the fact that the scribe of the poems was a

Ramsay, and tried to show that Blind Harry, the ignorant minstrel, had a collaborator named Sir John Ramsay, whom he identified with the Ross Herald.* Obviously, I do not subscribe to that view. I can find no evidence whatever that the author of the *Wallace* had any collaborator. But Mr. Brown was justified in calling attention to the frequent mention of heralds in the poem as a matter of significance, for it is more than likely that the author was himself a herald, one of the class of whom Chaucer speaks in the *House of Fame:*

> 'pursevauntes and heraudes,
> That cryen riche folkes laudes.

If it had not been for his preconception of a "blind bard," Thomas Warton would probably have proposed herald-authorship of the *Wallace*, for immediately after his discussion of the poem, which he thought translated from the Latin, and from which he quotes some eight pages to show the poet's mastery in painting, his terse and elegant style, and allegorical invention, he goes on directly to speak of various historical romances many of which appear to have been written by heralds. "It was customary," he states, to "appoint none to this office [of herald] but persons of discernment, address, experience, and some degree of education. . . . They were necessarily connected with the

minstrels at public festivals and thence acquired a facility of reciting adventures. . . . They frequently received fees or largesse in common with the minstrels."

The Wallace-poet emphasizes the rôle of heralds in three notable scenes. The first is in the sixth book, where Edward I is pictured with a fabulous host of sixty thousand men at Biggar, making a demand of submission from Wallace, who repudiates it violently.

> The awfull king gert twa harroldis be brocht,
> Gaiff thaim commaund, in all the haist thai mocht,
> To charge Wallace, that he sulde cum him till,
> Witht out promys, and put him in his will.

The heralds are clearly instructed as to what they shall say to the hero on their arrival. As soon as they are received by him, they offer their "credence" (credentials) and he reads the summons in the presence of his knights, asks the messengers whether they prefer to have his answer "be wryt or word," and when they ask for it in writing, indites in haste his defiant reply, beginning "thow reyffar king" — words which have been skilfully used by Mr. Neilson to determine the date of the poem, for they seem to reflect circumstances of the poet's own day.

> This wryt he gaiff to the harraldis but mar,
> And gud reward he gart delyuer thaim thar.

The " good reward " is sarcastic. First Wallace has the head removed from a young squire Fehew (Fitz Hugh), a nephew of King Edward, who has accompanied the heralds in disguise.

> A cot off armes he tuk on him but baid;
> With the harroldis full prewaly he raid.

Having been detected by Wallace's strange companion Jop, alias Grimsby, who was formerly a " pursiwant " of Edward, he is thus made to suffer for wearing " feigned arms." One herald has his tongue removed, and another has his eyes put out. Then the two are sent back to their " false " king, whose anger at the " despitfull " deed knows no bounds. The deed was assuredly " a fell outrage " as he declared, even if the reason given, that the heralds were " fals till armys and maynsuorn," was true. At all events, the author knew circumstances under which a herald might justifiably, according to custom, be severely punished.*

Of course, this whole episode is fiction. Edward was not even in Scotland at the time assigned. He had no nephew Fitz Hugh. No such battle as is described ever took place at Biggar. The mutilation of the heralds, also, is happily unconfirmed by fact, — so far, at least, as concerns any such deed on the part of William Wallace.

In glaring contrast with the attitude of the false Edward, the noble king of France is said to have

admired the " conqueror " Wallace and longed to have the " great delight " of seeing him. He therefore dispatches a herald, rehearses to him his intent, and sends him off with a " closed letter," the substance of which in ceremonial form is recorded. The herald seeks Wallace's presence properly and " salutes him with honor reverently." Wallace receives him " with lawly obeysance," and asks his " credence," which is handed him by the herald, with new ceremonies and respects, whereupon Wallace bids him welcome " with a fre hartly will," and says he shall soon have his answer.

> The harrold baid, on to the xxty day,
> With Wallace still, in gud weillfayr and play;
> Contende the tyme with worschip and plesance;
> Be gud awys maid his deliuerance.
> With his awn hand he wrait on to the king
> All his entent, as twyching to this thing.
> Rycht rych reward he gaiff the harrold to,
> And him conwoyde, quhen he had leyff to go,
> Out off the toun with gudly cumpanye,
> His leyff he tuk, syn went on to the se.*

Then an account is given of the herald's return, via La Rochelle, " sekand the king, als gudly as he may," until he reaches the royal court at Paris, " peirles off renoun." He is well received and tells his monarch the result of his mission, commending Wallace highly, and communicating his letter — " this hie affect and dyt off hys writyng " — the

statement in formal language that he would visit him within a year.

Again, in that still more preposterous scene * where the Queen of England tries unsuccessfully to enamour Wallace and cajole him to her will, we hear much talk of heralds and their safe-conducts in carrying on a negotiation for peace. Three lords, chosen as messengers and provided with the King's seal, sought Wallace, and showed him "many subtle case." Wallace heard all their "sophammis," but got his own terms. "For nakyn thing the pees thai wald nocht faill."

It will be noticed that every scene in which heralds play a leading part is a concoction of the poet's, without any historical justification. All the more importance should surely attach to these incidents if borrowed or invented; they would seem to show on his part special interest in heralds.

One remark in the poem, however, may be thought to show that the author was not a herald himself. In an interesting passage he stops his narrative to start a "discussion" as to what constitutes a lord, saying:

> Wallace a lord he may be clepyt weyll,
> Thocht ruryk folk tharoff haiff litill feill;
> Na deyme na lord, bot landis be thair part.
> Had he the warld, and be wrachit off hart,
> He is no lord as to the worthines;
> It can nocht be, but (without) fredome, lordlyknes.

At the Roddis thai mak ful mony ane,
Quhilk worthy ar, thocht landis haiff thai nane.
*This discussyng I leiff herroldis till end.**

The *style* of this reference is parallel to the remarks, already discussed, in which the poet follows Chaucer, but, considered in the light of what precedes, it may mean somewhat more. It may well be compared with one by Holland,† where he relieves himself of telling further of the arms of the knights he mentions by referring the matter to heralds:

Now giff I sall schewe
The order of thar armis, it war to tell teir (hard),
The barris of best gold, thocht I thaim hele knewe,
It suld ws occupy all day; tharfor I end heir,
Referris me to harraldis, to tell ȝow the hale.‡

Holland was secretary to the Earl of Moray and wrote his book at Darnaway Castle. Whether or no he was actually a herald in practice, he knew completely, as he takes pains to assert, the order of arms. Blind Harry borrowed other features from Holland and may have imitated him here. His knowledge of heralds impresses one as intimate and real. His referring of the dispute about lordship to them may have been only a way of ending his own remarks, made with a graceful bow to his superior comrades in the profession.

Another parallel may be cited from a Scotch poem on heraldry, contained in a book of Sir William Cummyns's of Inverallochy, Marchmond Herald, of about the year 1500 (not far from the date of the *Wallace*) and composed with much artifice in the *Troilus* stanza.* The author makes himself out to be a person of "simplest conceit" and on certain topics refers to his betters.

How thai be born, in quhat kindis, and quhare.
Also be quhom, and eftir in excellence.
That I refer to my lordis to declair,
Kingis of armes, and heraldis of prudens,
And persewantis, and grant my negligens
That I suld not attempe thus to commoune,
Bot of ther grace, correctioune, and pardoune.

The same sort of deference appears in his conclusion:

And I confess my simple insufficiens:
Litill haf I sene, and reportit weil less,
Of this materis to haf experience.
Tharfor, quhar I al neidful not express,
In my waiknes, and not of wilfulnes,
My seid lordis correk me diligent,
To maid menis, or sey the remanent.

This poem shows at least that at the latter part of the fifteenth century one Scottish herald was ready to compose Chaucerian verse, and that self-depreciation was for such as he a convention.

Of more interest for us, however, is the fact that the chief Scottish poet of the sixteenth century, Sir David Lyndsay, whom we have had so often occasion to quote, was a herald. About 1529 Lyndsay, who had served James V as attendant in boyhood, was appointed Lyon King at Arms, and filled that important post until his death in 1555. As Lyon Herald, Lyndsay supervised the preparation of the elaborate *Register of Arms* of the Scottish nobility and gentry, which was completed in 1542 and is now preserved in the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh.* One of his last duties was to preside at a chapter of heralds convened at Holyrood for the trial and punishment of William Crawar, a messenger, for abuse of his function. With such a distinguished poet as an example, it need not surprise any one if the *Wallace* was composed by a herald.†

Heralds, of course, were regularly used as messengers, and if Blind Harry was a herald-messenger by profession, it would explain why the topography of the *Wallace* is so exact, a feature to which Mr. Brown has called particular attention.‡

One king's messenger, who is frequently mentioned near Blind Harry in the Treasurer's Accounts, and who bore the very name of Wallace, also played a rôle which it is important to consider. He appears in the Accounts as the bearer of letters

to Lamerik, to the abbots of Galloway, the Earl of Erroll, to the Lords Gray, Glamis, and Olyfant, and to others. He was given money to pass "a ij dyverss tymis owre the water with letteris to summonde certane personis in Awdy"; "to pass in Fyfe to warne the lardis to meyt the King to pass with him to Sanct Johniston"; "to pass with the Kingis lettrez to the lordis in Lowdiane and the Mers for warning to the raids," etc.* For us it is most noteworthy, however, that this Wallace, as we are informed in the Accounts, "tauld geistis to the king," and may therefore have been called a minstrel.

The heralds, messengers, and minstrels of a court were closely associated both in life and profession. Blind Harry himself groups heralds and minstrels together as alike rewarded abundantly by the admirable Queen of England, who besought them to be her friends.† There is, in truth, no reason why Blind Harry may not be called a "minstrel," if it is understood that that term may be properly used of a dignified person in high employ. Many critics seem to be unaware that there were as many different kinds of minstrels in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as there are actors to-day. There were some so-called of a disreputable vagabond type, "otio addicti," against whom acts of parliament were directed, and some

of a pathetic type, "blind crowders," who sang ballads for a pittance. But there were others who might almost be called poets-laureate. Two of the most interesting biographies of great leaders in Wallace's time and shortly after, those of Bertrand du Guesclin and the Black Prince, were written in French verse by dignified minstrels in the service of nobles. On the one hand, *La Vie du Prince Noir* * was composed in octosyllabic couplets in a "romantic" style, not unlike that of Barbour, by the herald of the Earl of Chandos. On the other hand, *La Vie Vaillant Bertran du Guesclin* † was written in long lines in "epic" style by a minstrel Cuvelier, and dedicated to a prince. Blind Harry is a sort of Scottish Cuvelier brought up on Chaucer, and any one with patience would find it very instructive to compare *The Acts and Deeds of the Illustrious and Valiant Champion Sir William Wallace* with the huge *chanson de geste*, nearly twice as long (22790 lines), concerning the great Constable of France of the early thirteenth century, like Wallace a foe of the English. In features large and small, the *Wallace* reminds one of this "chronicle" of the dispute regarding the succession in Brittany and subsequent events in which Bertrand played, or could be made to play, a part, and both authors wrote in the same unconstrained fashion as to facts. The term "minstrel"

was also applied to one of the chief French writers of the early fourteenth century, Watriquet de Couvin, the eulogist of Gauchier de Châtillon, Bertrand's successor as Constable, a poet who influenced Chaucer in painting his portrait of the illustrious Knight.* The Wallace-poet might have felt honored in the company of such as these. If Blind Harry was really reputed as a "ministrel" to princes — Major makes no mention of peasants — it would have been easy for that learned man to have written about him as he did in his Latin history, and knowing nothing about his personality save what he took his name to indicate, but recognizing that the poet was *peritus* in his *carmen*, he might very naturally, according to the custom of the time, have hinted as he did at a likeness to the greatest of blind bards.

None, it has been made evident, of the might-be autobiographical references in the *Wallace* turn out on inspection to be of definite value in determining who the author was, but they show the character of his literary training, and by inference his station.

As is evident from his solicitude to make Wallace "gentle born," and his disdain for MacFadden because "low born he was and of low simple blood," "of right low birth, suppose he took on hand," † as well as from other considerations, the poet was sympathetic to the higher classes, whether

or no he belonged to them himself. In his discussion of nobility, already quoted, he set himself against "ruryk (rustic) folk," who have "litill feill" in such matters, matters that greatly interested him.* The fact that he shows no signs of much inner refinement, or cosmopolitanism, does not affect the question of his birth. The burly person who wrote the rough alliterative poem on Flodden in which we read "a gentleman by Jesu this geste made!" † was a follower, perhaps a herald, of the house of Stanley. The Wallace-poet in any case was certainly no quiet scholar or amiable, chivalric ecclesiastic, like Barbour, but a vigorous propagandist, a ferocious *realpolitiker*, without principle when it was a question of Scotland's place in the sun, without reluctance to lie in manipulating history to his own end.‡ He was no common strolling bard.

CHAPTER VIII

The Purpose and Spirit of the Wallace

'T is the sunset of life gives me mystical lore,
And coming events cast their shadows before.
Lochiel's Warning

O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!
Hamlet

WE can better understand why the author of the *Wallace* chose his pseudonym if we consider the political circumstances under which he wrote and certain contemporary methods of influencing public opinion; and we can better understand the spirit of his work if we consider the background of pagan morality which the pseudonym connotes.

Thanks to Mr. George Neilson, we are at last in a position to date the *Wallace* pretty exactly. Mr. Neilson's chief argument * is drawn from the epithet " reyffar," applied by Wallace to Edward I, which he has shown to be merely an echo of words used in an Act of the Scottish Parliament in 1482 regarding Edward IV.

" The ' Revare Edward,' " he says, " of himself alone is conclusive of the date of Harry's poem, and

is so much the more satisfactory in that respect as supplying the clearest possible explanation of the bitterness of spirit at the core of the poem, the malignant ruthlessness it displays towards Englishmen, and the glaring failure of the poet to redeem the hereditary sense of enmity by associating it with any generous note towards an enemy so worthy of the Scottish steel. In all these respects it is far as the poles asunder from Barbour's *Bruce*, which, never vindictive or savage, achieves its purpose of patriotism in the spirit of chivalry without the incessant vengeance and refusal of quarter which make Harry's *Wallace* reek of the shambles. Written in or about 1482 or 1483, the poem was shaped when Scotland and England were at war, when Edward IV, intriguing with the exiled Duke of Albany and Earl of Douglas, was the object of intense exasperation. He had supported Albany's pretension to the crown, and fomented every treason against the Scottish throne; his armies had overrun the borders with fire and sword; his fleets had assailed — though not with impunity — Scottish ships in the Firth of Forth; and his bargain with Albany was that, as the price of English support, Albany, if successful in winning the kingdom, should hold it as Edward's feudatory, and should further cede to him the fortresses of Berwick and Lochmaben and the territories of Liddesdale and

Eskdale and Annandale. There was justification, therefore, for Scottish indignation against such a policy of conquest by intrigue and against a 'king of reyff.'

"The phrase was radically a Lancastrian taunt. Scotland had long, and with fair consistency, favored the red rose. Margaret of Anjou and Henry VI had once found shelter in exile at the Scottish court. The French and the Scots were leagued enemies of the House of York. Edward IV, the Yorkist victor, veritably enough a 'king of reyff' in England, had both by war and policy become a 'revare' in Scotland too, and the country was up in arms. Of the national indignation Harry's poem is a passionate expression. Tending so directly to explain its violence and ruthlessness of tone, the ascertainment of its date thus considerably intensifies its political and historical significance. In virtue of this explanation, it becomes of real value historically, as reflecting the vehemence of Scottish antagonism to England and Edward IV, *circa* 1483."

Now, it is important for us to observe that at that very time belief in prophets was real, even in high quarters,* and it was the custom to use popular delusions regarding political prophecy to arouse national bitterness. Thomas Rhymer and Merlin were then particularly famous personages and

their vaticinations counted as of genuine value. The greater part of the documents later comprised in that extremely popular book, the *Whole Prophecy of Scotland*,* prophecies of Bede, Banister, Waldhave, and Bridlington, as well as of True Thomas and Merlin, were then widely current, and influential, to a degree that we nowadays find it hard to credit, in engendering strife. It will be remembered how Bacon in his time took sober note of such prophecies, giving it as his judgment "that they ought all to be despised, and ought to serve but for winter-talk by the fireside." "Though," he adds, "when I say despised, I mean it as for belief, for otherwise the spreading or publishing of them is in no sort to be despised. For they have done much mischief, and I see many severe laws made to suppress them. That that hath given them grace and some credit consisteth in three things. First, that men mark when they hit and never mark when they miss; as they do generally of dreams. The second is, that probable conjectures, or obscure traditions, many times turn themselves into prophecies; while the nature of man, which coveteth divination, thinks it no peril to foretell that which indeed they do but collect. . . . The third and last (which is the great one) is, that almost all of them, being infinite in number, have been impostures, and by idle and crafty brains merely contrived and

feigned, after the event passed." This last aspect of prophecies is for us the most important. But criticism was of no avail and the vogue continued. "Perhaps it may be thought," says Lord Hailes, in his *Remarks on the History of Scotland* (1773), "that I have bestowed unnecessary pains in discrediting the popular predictions ascribed to Thomas the Rhymer. Let it, however, be considered that the name of Thomas the Rhymer is not forgotten in Scotland, nor his authority altogether slighted even at this day. Within the memory of man, his prophecies, and the prophecies of other Scottish soothsayers, have not only been reprinted, but have been consulted with a weak, if not criminal, curiosity."

Quite recently, Dr. Rupert Taylor, in a valuable thesis,* has traced the source of political prophecy after its vogue was established by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth century, and has made it evident that historians have paid far too little heed to its importance in determining popular feeling at crises in the relations of England and Scotland. Here I need only dwell on certain evidence of special interest to us which Dr. Taylor omitted, that, namely, of Major, who has much to say of the prophets of Great Britain.

Merlin interested Major particularly.† He devotes a whole chapter to him, in which he discusses

at length the mage's incubus origin and the relation of that fact to his gift of prophecy.* But he also treats him humanly as a potent personage in British history, rebuking him, on moral grounds, for helping King Uther in the deception of Ygerne. "Many rhymes," says Major, "are current as to all that Merlin foretold in the presence of King Vortiger as about to happen. But they are ambiguous, being of this nature: that till the event his prophecies are not recognized as such. Wherefore, to augur anything from his prophecies is as if one had to find one's way through the mists of a clouded sky. I should have placed more faith in the prophecies of this man had he foretold with certainty the purely contingent. That method of proceeding is but darkness. Quite otherwise does it stand with John the Evangelist in the Apocalypse, a book which the Church has received as divinely inspired, and in such a matter the Church cannot err. Merlin it merely permits to be read." †

Merlin was surely taken seriously when he was brought into comparison with St. John. But perhaps the most interesting of Major's comments on prophets is that which forms an immediate prelude to his account of Wallace. He there repeats from the Scottish chronicles a familiar prophecy of Thomas of Erceldoune ("hoc est Thomas Rhyth-

mificator") long before delivered in the castle of Dunbar, adding the following comment: "Our writers assure us that Thomas often foretold this thing and the other, and the common people throughout Britain give no little credence to such stories, which for the most part — and indeed they merit nothing else — I smile at. For that such persons foretold things purely contingent before they came to pass I cannot admit; and if only they use a sufficient obscurity of language, the uninstructed vulgar will twist a meaning out of it somehow in the direction that best pleases them." *

The important feature of this remark is its attest that the prophecies of Thomas and "such persons" were given no little credence by the common people throughout Britain and readily accepted by the uninstructed vulgar. Any one, then, who desired to influence the people at large might naturally employ their belief in such stories for his own ends. But belief in prophecies was not confined to common folk. It held in the highest circles. King James I was a reader of prophecies, and it was known that in 1437 his murder was predicted by a woman soothsayer from Ireland. Buchanan says that James III was greatly addicted to certain witches, and one of their prophecies, it is alleged, aroused his enmity against the Earl of Mar, which caused the latter's tragic death in 1479.†

That the author of the *Wallace* was interested in prophecy, and determined to draw what advantage he could from it, is evident from his open appeal to Thomas Rhymer. He, of course, knew of the reliance placed in Thomas by Scottish chroniclers like Wyntoun,* Gray, and Bower. But he was doubtless stimulated most by the example of Barbour's *Bruce*, which his own poem was intended to offset, if not to counterblast.† Early in his work,‡ Barbour quoted Thomas's prophecy that Bruce should be king "and haiff this land [Scotland] all in leding." The author of the *Wallace*, however, goes him one better, and makes English prophets as well as Thomas vaticinate about his hero. Near the beginning of his poem we read: §

> Als Inglis clerks in prophecys thai fand
> How a Wallace suld putt thaim of Scotland.

It is more important that he represents Thomas as actually staying with the minister at Faile when news of Wallace's death is brought there. Thomas at once denies the report, and when he hears that Wallace still lives, he makes his prophecy:

> Than Thomas said: "Forsuth, or he decess,
> Mony thousand in feild sall mak thar end.
> Off this regioune he sall the Sothroun send;
> And Scotland thris he sall bryng to the pess." ||

This, indeed, is a line of structure in the poem. The author proceeds formally to show how Thomas's

prophecy, elsewhere unheard-of, was verified by events. He develops his story by personal devices, adapting history at pleasure, to show how Scotland was thrice brought to peace by Wallace's exploits. " Thus Wallace thrys has maid all Scotland fre " * — a fine fiction!

The author of the *Wallace* lined himself up with those who were glad to make one or other of the goodly fellowship of prophets a mouthpiece of their own thoughts. He took as the burden-bearer of his new message a mythical personage of the same character as Thomas Rhymer, Merlin, Ossian, and others less well known, all of whom were reputed to have been in the otherworld; and he thus subtly justified the startling statements of his book by an implicit appeal to supernatural authority.†

We are now ready for the interesting question: Does the attribution of the *Wallace* to such a person as Blind Harry, son of Gow mac Morn, and great grandson of Finn mac Cowl, reveal anything with regard to the tone of the work ?

In the Book of the Dean of Lismore, gathered in Scotland about the author's time, is a poem often called *Ossian's Prayer*. Here, in response to the bard's inquiry, St. Patrick declares that the Fenians are not in Heaven and he cannot secure them entrance there. Whereupon Ossian, a " mourn-

ful, poor old man," breaks out in savage condemnation of the Christian faith.

Better the fierce conflict of Finn and his Feinn
Than thy holy master, and thyself together.

And he is not convinced by the Saint's rebukes:

Ossian, Prince's son, 't will be thy soul's great loss,
That thou now think'st only of the battles of the Feinn.

In another poem in the same book, Ossian thus exults at the deeds of the old warriors:

It was on Fintray's strand, down at the sea,
Our people made this slaughter,
Of these, the kings of all the world,
And drank our full of vengeance.
Our fierce and conquering arms
Laid many a noble warrior low;
Many a sword and shield
Lay shattered on the strand,
The strand of Fintray of the port;
Many dead bodies lay upon the earth,
Many a hero with a vacant grin.
Much was the sport we gathered in the fight.

Perhaps the best embodiment of this Fenian spirit is found in the elaborate *Dialogue of Oisin and Patrick*, where Oisin laments his departed fellows:

O Patrick, sad is the tale,
To be after the heroes, thus feeble;
Listening to clerics and to bells,
Whilst I am a poor blind old man.*

The Saint rebukes him earnestly:

Thou art old, withered, and hoary,
Thy understanding is gone, and mirth;
Leave off thy vehement talk,
And thy bed shall be in heaven beyond.

Thou art piteous and devoid of sense.
That is worse for thee than being blind;
If thou didst get thy sight within,
Great would be thy attachment to heaven beyond.

But Oisin fervently persists in his praise of the old "mighty men" (among them Gow mac Morn) who were "not slow in making slaughter." There was no hero in heaven or hell the equal of Finn: he surpassed St. Patrick's Lord.

'T was not in forming fields and grass,
That my king took delight;
But in mangling the bodies of heroes,
In contesting kingdoms and spreading his fame.

Many a battle, victory and contest,
Was celebrated by the Fians of Fail;
I never heard that any feat was performed
By the king of Saints; or that he reddened his hand.

Oisin said, sorrowful is my tale!
The sound of thy lips is not sweet to me;
I will cry my fill, but not for God,
But for Fionn and the Fians not being alive!

Again we are reminded of Billie Blin, "the malicious personage" whom Professor Child has iden-

tified with "Blind the Bad," "the Carl Blind, surnamed Bavis," "Old Carl Hood," who "comes for ill, but never for good." "Odin," says Professor Child, "though not a thoroughly malignant divinity, had his dark side, and one of his titles in Sæmund's Edda is Bölverkr, *maleficus*. He first caused war by casting his spear among men, and Dag, after he has killed Helgi, says Odin was the author of all the mischief, for he brought strife among kinsmen." *

Saxo Grammaticus † tells of a certain blind man Bolwis "who was bribed to bring the sons of Sigar and the sons of Hamund to turn their friendship into hatred." "King Sigar," we read, "had been used to transact almost all affairs by the advice of two old men, one of whom was Bolwis. The temper of these two men was so different that one used to reconcile folk who were at feud, while the other loved to sunder in hatred those who were bound by friendship, and by estranging folk to fan pestilent quarrels."

"So Bolwis began by reviling the sons of Hamund to the sons of Sigar, in lying slanders, declaring that they never used to preserve the bonds of fellowship loyally, and that they must be restrained by war rather than by league."

Bilwis and Bolwis are akin to the two brothers of Welsh myth Nissyen and Evnissyen, as set

forth in the Mabinogi of *Branwen*. Nissyen was a lover of peace and would always "cause his family to be friends when their wrath was at the highest," but Evnissyen "would cause strife between his two brothers when they were most at peace." In Layamon's *Brut*,* Merlin, counselor of Arthur, says of himself that his mind is bale-wise ("mi gæst is bæliwis") and that he is not disposed to gladness, mirth, or good words.

Here we have the key to the tone of the *Wallace:* it is the tone of the Fenians, of Odin, of Evnissyen, and Merlin the bale-wise. The opening words of the author are an appeal to his countrymen to remember their ancestors and oppose their "ald ennemys cummyn of Saxonys blud," and presently we learn, what the rest of the book abundantly proves, that his hero's "haile mynde, labour and besynes, was set in war." †

> It was his lyff, and maist part of his fude,
> To see thaim sched the byrnand Sothroun blude.

The *Wallace*, indeed, is bale-wise from beginning to end, a perfect welter of slaughter and revenge. "Be ready for revenge" was the author's most urgent appeal to his countrymen — the fundamental teaching of his book.

> Yhe nobill men, that ar off Scottis kind,
> Thar peteous dede yhe kepe in to your mynd;
> And ws rawenge, quhar we are set in thrang.‡

His prime object was to fan a pestilent quarrel, and he could have chosen no person more suitable to be the mouthpiece of his violent hate than a bard of Fenian blood, one of the race of Ossian, and akin to Billie Blin, alias Odin, balewise, baleworker, sower of enmities, " who first brought strife among kinsmen."

The ferocity of the *Wallace* constituted no doubt a chief element of its early appeal, and unquestionably helped to establish the prejudice which for centuries kept interest in the poem keen. Now that that prejudice has passed, now that more gentle sentiments prevail everywhere among the Scots, their historians are more and more prone to slight Blind Harry's work, and to minimize its value — because they dislike its tone. But much too readily do they explain its faults as due to the fact that the author was an ignorant blind old minstrel, " the oracle of the unlettered crowd," " bitter as a man of limited knowledge, circumscribed by his blindness and the spirit of his time," would naturally be, his temper " on a level with the temper of the common people of his time, from whom he sprang." * The *Wallace* we have outgrown, let us hope, because its tone is outrageously pagan. The poet's non-Christian impulses are in accord with those of the so-called " wild Scots " of whom Major tells so much, the

Gaels, who perpetuated Ossian's contempt for apostles of mercy and peace.*

> Were *the Sons of Morn* alive,
> The priestly order soon must quit;
> You would find yourselves cut up,
> Ye men of the spotted crooks.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Were *the Sons of black Garry* alive,
> Or Caoilte, who was ever so brave,
> Neither the sounds of bells or priests
> Would now be heard in Rath Cruachan.†

Contemplating Blind Harry, whoever he was who for good reason chose that alias, our thoughts turn naturally to that excellent writer who more than any other in Scotland in our time was fired by Gaelic flame. William Sharp wrote under the pseudonym Fiona Macleod, a name which " flashed ready made " into his mind, because he wished in disguise to mirror a side of his nature which he could not bring himself to expose openly. " Sometimes," he wrote in 1893, " I am tempted to believe I am half a woman, and so far saved as I am by the hazard of chance from what a woman can be made to suffer if one let the light of the common day illuminate the avenues and vistas of her heart.‡ " He used the woman's name Fiona Macleod because the works in which he first used it " grew out of the subjective or feminine side of his nature." His friend Grant Allen at once recog-

nized in *Pharais* " that shadowy Ossianic spirit, as of your misty straits and your floating islands." " It is instinct," he wrote, " with the dreamy Celtic genius, and seems to come to us straight from the Isles of the Dead."

This was true. But the Celtic Muse had different tones, as Fiona Macleod was well aware. Hear what she wrote to the same critic after his review of *Pharais :*

" What you say about the survival of folklore as a living heritage is absolutely true — *how* true perhaps few know, except those who have lived among the Gaels, of their blood, and speaking the ancient language. The Celtic paganism lies profound and potent still beneath the fugitive drift of Christianity and Civilisation, as the deep sea beneath the coming and going of the tides. No one can understand the islander and remote Alban Gael who ignores or is oblivious of the potent pagan and indeed elementally barbaric forces behind all exterior appearances." * What, we may ask, led William Sharp to publish *The Pagan Review* ?

The mythical Blind Harry came from faery and was no Christian, and if the poet into whose mind that pseudonym sprang, as suitable for the expression of his pagan side, never felt sorrow for his exhibition of ire, then one may well fear that for centuries Mahoun has been leading him a merry

dance "amangis the feyndis fell." His fellow maker Dunbar had a glimpse of Hell and there discovered wild Scots galore, with one MacFadden at their head, chattering Gaelic and dancing a Highland fling.

> Than cryd Mahoun for a Heleand padȝane;
> Syne ran a feynd to feche Makfadȝane,
> Ffar northwart in a nuke;
> Be he the correnoch had done schout,
> Erschemen so gadderit him abowt
> In Hell grit rowme thay tuke.
>
> Thae tarmegantis, with tag and tatter,
> Ffull lowd in Ersche begowth to clatter,
> And rowp [croaked] lyk revin and ruke:
> The Devill sa devit wes with thair ȝell,
> That in the depest pot of hell,
> He smorit thame with smvke.*

The Gaelic element in Dunbar's inspiration, and indeed in that of all the independent Scottish poets of mediaeval times, has never been properly defined. That inquiry remains yet to be made. But Gaelic inheritance surely forms part of that much-discussed quality "Scotticism," the old *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum*, which is something more than simple love of country, *amor Scotiae*, as some would have it, and has little to do with rank. The writer of the article on Harry the Minstrel in the latest edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was possibly justified in speaking of the *Wallace* as

" the earliest outstanding work which discloses that habit of Scotticism which took such strong hold of the popular Northern literature during the coming years of conflict with England. In this respect it is in marked contrast with all the patriotic verse of preceding and contemporary literature." But he was unwise to add: " This attitude of the *Wallace* may perhaps be accepted as corroborative evidence of the humble milieu and popular sentiment of its author." On the contrary, this attitude merely evidenced the general " savage vitality " of Scotland, much of which, as Professor David Masson maintained, " yet remains to be articulated in civilized books." *

" One does not like to say severe things about a poor old wandering minstrel," writes Professor Minto.† " Like many other bygones that were interesting to bygones, he and his heroic verse, once an acceptable arrival at many a lively feast and proud residence, would be considered a terrible visitation in modern society. Blind Harry has not the elements of perennial interest. Only strong patriotism could have composed, and only strong patriotism could have listened to, his strains."

We may well admit that the writer as well as the readers of the *Wallace* were strong patriots. But let us not deceive ourselves. If we must say severe things about certain aspects of the poem, it is not

because it is the work of a poor blind wandering minstrel, or even because the events it records are now deemed in large part fictitious. We must no longer confuse our literary with our moral appreciation of the book's worth. Scots, in truth, dislike Blind Harry nowadays for the very reason that their ancestors formerly liked him, and Barbour, offering so great a contrast in personality, being so much less violent and bloodthirsty, so much more generous and kindly, is applauded instead. It is not, therefore, as Dr. Craigie has ironically suggested,* because "fact must be more poetic than fiction," that Barbour is more praised, but because chivalry appeals to us more than cruelty, and gentleness more than lust for revenge. Mr. Craigie did a service in calling attention to the high literary quality of parts of the *Wallace*, but its general tone, he would have done well to emphasize, is abominable. The poet's art is that of an admiring disciple of Chaucer, and deserved proper applause as such; but his sentiments would have made Chaucer wince.

In fairness, however, it should be said that vituperation was not confined to the North. Such Englishmen as Skelton, sometimes very foulmouthed, delighted in abuse of "the rude rank Scots" — Scots of the Out Isles. After the battle of Flodden, Skelton composed a poem:

Agaynst the proude Scottes clatteryinge,
That never wyl leave theyr tratlynge,

in which we read:

Are not these Scots
Fools and sots
Such boast to make,
To prate and crake,
To face, to brace,
All void of grace ?
So proud of heart,
So overthwart,
So out of frame,
So void of shame,
As it is enrolled,
Written, and told,
Within this quaire ?

Only a few years later Major wrote: "I have read in histories written by Englishmen that the Scots are the worst of traitors, and that this stain is with them inborn. . . . The Scots, on the other hand, call the English the chief of traitors, and, denying that their weapon is a brave man's sword, affirm that all their victories are won by guile and craft. I, however, am not wont to credit the common Scot in his vituperation of the English nor yet the Englishman in his vituperation of the Scot. . . . In the matter of prejudices that have their root in hatred, bear this in mind: that two neighboring kingdoms, striving for the mastery, never cherish a sincere desire for peace." *

And later he reverts to the same topic: " It is not of yesterday that I have observed how it is the custom of the vulgar Scot to say nasty things about the English, and contrariwise. Love and hatred have this in common: that alike they tend to becloud and blind our intelligent judgment of things, and give an erroneous and even perverse interpretation of actions the most excellent, when these are the work of the other side. Now it behoves every man, and most of all a priest, to rid himself of *this pestilent habit,* and to weigh in equal scales whatever comes before him before judgment. Otherwise such an one is unworthy of confidence."*

It was a Scot, Wyntoun, who, before the Wallace-poet's day, thus counselled his countrymen:

> Set [though] we haiff nane affectioune
> Off caus till Ynglis natioune,
> Yeit it ware baith syn and schame
> Meir than thai [de]serve, thaim to defame.†

Major, not the Wallace-poet, followed Wyntoun's advice — to his honor!

The only spirit that quickens one in the *Wallace* is the spirit of patriotism; but so malignant is that spirit, so stimulating to cruelty and barbarity, that it seems like the spirit not of God but of the Devil. The spirit of hate animates the *Wallace* throughout, and no power on earth can cast it out, so as to make its body wholly clean.

The best in the *Wallace* was set forth by Henry Charteris in the prologue to his edition of 1570,* where he defends himself against some one's accusation that by publishing the poem he was stirring men to the remembrance of old injuries rather than to the desire of peace: " God (who is the searcher of men's hearts) does know how far that is from my mind. Although that in the days of Wallace, England did vehemently oppress this realm, wherethrough most justly he did oppose himself to them, yet I esteem it a thing not impossible but that old enemies may become new and perfect friends, and again old friends become new and plain enemies, as it befell betwixt the Scots and Picts. Yet I mean nothing less than to stir up the hearts of any men against any nation, realm or country. My intent and chief scope is this in general, to move all men (after the example of Wallace) to the defence of their native realm, and commonwealth, to hazard whatsoever they have in this earth, for the maintenance thereof against any nation, French or English, Spanish, or others whatsoever, that would invade the same. And also that the valiant acts and deeds of such as have spent and given their travails and their lives therefor should never come into oblivion, but remain in fresh and recent memory to the perpetual glory of their name and fame, during all ages and posterities unto the world's end."

Charteris' "intent and chief scope" deserves commendation and we can only wish that he had had a finer instrument to work with. Caxton had considerable difficulty in defending the *Morte Darthur* against such as thought it a false narrative of vain slaughter and bold bawdry, and he had to resort to the advice: "Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown." But Caxton had much the easier task, for few, we fancy, have ever found his Book of Arthur other than an incentive to noble deeds. In it what linger longest in our memories — and how long they do linger! — are the numerous "renowned acts of humanity, gentleness, and chivalry."

CHAPTER IX

Master Blair

And of his song nought only the sentence,
As writ myn autour called Lollius,
But pleynly, save our tonges difference,
I dar wel seyn in al that Troilus
Seyde in his song, lo! every word right thus
As I shal seyn.

Chaucer

AFTER the poet's blindness, the most vexed question in connection with the *Wallace* concerns a "Latin book" by "Master Blair," which the poet explicitly mentions as his principal authority, — one, he claims, superior to all others regarding Wallace, yet unknown to any one else.*

Off Wallace lyff quha has a forthar feill
May schaw furth mair with wit and eloquence;
For I to this haiff don my diligence,
Eftyr the pruff geyffyn fra the Latyn buk,
Quhilk Maister Blayr in his tym wndyrtuk,
In fayr Latyn compild it till ane end.

This Master Blair, according to the poet, was:

A worthy clerk bath wys and rycht sawage.†
Lewyt he was befor in Parys toune,
Amang maistris in science and renoune.
Wallace and he at hayme in scule had beyne;
Sone eftirwart, as verite is seyne.

He was the man that pryncipall wndirtuk,
That fyrst compild in dyt the Latyne buk
Off Wallace lyff, rycht famous of renoun;
And Thomas Gray persone off Libertoune.*
With him thai war, and put in story all,
Offt ane or bath, mekill of his truaill.

Eftir Wallace thai lestit mony day,
Thir twa knew best off gud Schir Wilȝhamys deid.†

Master Blair, "in his priest's weed," is once sent by Wallace to warn the west, and he figures further as a companion of the mysterious Jop, whose name before he was rechristened by the Scots was Grimsby.‡ He is pictured as writing in his book the absurd account of Wallace's appearance and attitudes, which was curiously made up by the author, in part from the description of characters in the Knight's Tale.§ Blair is also made to participate in the fantastic sea-struggle with John of Lynn, in which he is described as a doughty bowman, who himself cast the chief brigand's remains overboard; but in this last case, since it would not do for him to exalt himself in his own book, his exploits are said to have been recorded by his friend Gray, who was their "steerman" for the nonce.||

Until recently, nearly all historians and critics accepted the worthy French clerk, Master Blair, as an actual person, and merely speculated as to what

Blind Harry owed to him,* whether he was responsible for the descriptions of nature in the poem,† or for the variations from other chroniclers that it exhibits, and so on. On the ground of his statement that he used a Latin book, it has sometimes been argued that the author was not a minstrel, or that he was an ecclesiastic, as well as that he was not blind from birth.‡

But of late Master Blair has begun to play a different rôle. It is probably true, as Dr. Ross wrote,§ that "no human being possessing the faculty of reason could now be got to believe that any contemporary of the illustrious patriot could by any possibility have penned such a biography as Blind Harry gives us." Therefore, those who believe in Blair must apologize for Blind Harry. Mr. Henderson, who holds that the poet was always blind, maintains that he merely carried on the tradition of a Latin book from some earlier "bard," emphasizing that "so far from affirming that he had either seen or read the aforesaid book, Harry does not even affirm that it then existed; and if he does not actually imply that it no longer existed, he refrains from stating where, or from whom, he had access to it." || On the other hand, Dr. Moir, who holds that Harry was *not* born blind, believes that his mistakes might have been due to the fact that he grew more and more "rhapsodical" in old age,

and forgot "the true historical sequence of his tale." "Starting from his Latin original in the days of his youth, when perhaps he to some extent could read the original, he would gradually forget the exact facts of history as given by Blair and Gray, and give his enthralled and prejudiced audience something which he honestly believed was true, but which he could no longer from blindness verify or check. . . . I must say that Harry's allusions to his 'autor' are made in so guileless a way, that I do not consider him to be a wilful impostor. I think there had been some such book, but that, as I said above, Harry, carried away by rhapsodical fervour, gradually departed from his original. . . . If Blair wrote a Latin Book on Wallace, probably but one or two copies of it ever existed, and it is no wonder if these were lost at the Reformation, if not before." *

Though belief in Blair's book thus remains, the present trend of opinion is to regard it as a fictitious authority, † "an apocryphal work ostentatiously cited by the poet, which criticism ought to combat." ‡ So far the best arguments in favor of this view have been advanced by Mr. Brown.§ "To none of the critics," he says, "does it seem to have occurred that the poet's statements may be quite otherwise interpreted by comparing them with similar passages in other early works.

They seem to have forgotten that early authors in order to give their works the stamp of authority, very frequently, as Dunlop remarks, 'feigned that their fables had been translated from Latin, or derived from ancient French prose, in which they had been originally written, — averments which should never be accepted unless otherwise established to be true.' . . . The putting forth of works under a false name was not in early times associated with any sense of literary dishonesty. The practice arose from a desire on the part of authors to fortify themselves by alleging authority for their statements."

Mr. Brown cites among other less pertinent examples that of Chaucer's giving credit to "myn auctour called Lollius," instead of to Boccaccio, for the chief matter of the *Troilus*. The case of Lollius has very recently been discussed in most illuminating fashion by Professor Kittredge, who puts the situation as follows: *

"When Chaucer came to write this novel [*Troilus*], he wished — as all writers of fiction did, and do still — to lend his work an air of truth and authenticity. A ready and familiar device was, and still is, to appeal to some source that might be accepted as authoritative. Benoit and Boccaccio would not answer, for the conditions of the problem required an ancient (or at least an antique)

personage, and preferably one who had written in a learned language. Homer was manifestly out of the question. Dares, Dictys, and Geoffrey were likewise unavailable, for their works were current, and notoriously did not contain any such story as that which Chaucer meant to tell. Guido's name might perhaps have been used at a pinch; but he also was well-known and current, and except at a pinch indeed, his dry, compendious, and unsympathetic account of the love affair could not be cited as the source of Chaucer's warm and detailed narrative. For it was not only facts that Chaucer wished to ascribe to his *auctor*, but feelings, since he himself, so he tells us, is an outsider in matters of love: *

> Of no sentement I this endite,
> But out of Latin in my tonge it write.

And, in fact, there was no pinch at all. For *Lollius* was at hand, a venerable and veritable Latin name, and his vanished history, just because it had vanished, was precisely the stalking-horse that the fiction needed. Hence as a part of that fiction, Chaucer credited his material *en bloc* to Lollius, and proposed with a light heart, to be merely a translator from the Latin."

" Lollius, then, in Chaucer's fiction, is not Boccaccio or Benoit or Guido or Statius or Ovid or

Boëthius: *he is simply Lollius*, an alleged Latin author on the Trojan War, to whom Chaucer chooses, for his artistic purposes, to credit practically everything that the *Troilus* contains—everything, that is, that Chaucer drew from Boccaccio and Benoit and Guido and Statius and Ovid and Boëthius, and likewise everything that he drew from the brain of Geoffrey Chaucer. In other words, Chaucer's pretended use of Lollius is not an acknowledgment of obligations to Boccaccio or to anybody else: it is a fiction, deliberately adopted in advance, impressed upon the reader with all the emphasis of which the poet is capable, and fostered and supported by repeated assertion and skilful innuendo."

Blind Harry acted like his master Chaucer. He gathered material for his narrative from written documents of various sorts, as well as from oral traditions connected or not with Wallace. Into the question of these his sources, however, I have now no desire to enter. I should like simply to indicate the person who seems to have led him, as a means of covering his tracks, to cite the authority of Master Blair. Again the road leads to the prophets. The worthy French clerk, Master Blair, fictitious recorder of the deeds of Wallace, seems to be merely an echo of the worthy French clerk, Master Blaise, fictitious recorder of the deeds of Merlin.

Of this Blaise we read in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur:* "Then Merlin took his leave of Arthur and of the two kings, for to go and see his master Bleyse that dwelt in Northumberland, and so he departed and came to his master, that was passing glad of his coming. And there he told how Arthur and the two kings had sped at the great battle and how it was ended, and told the names of every king and knight of worship that was there. And so Bleyse wrote the battle, word by word, as Merlin told him, how it began, and by whom, and in likewise how it was ended, and who had the worse. All the battles that were done in Arthur's days Merlin had his Master Bleyse do write." *

This is the only place where Malory refers to Master Blaise, but he is repeatedly mentioned in Arthurian story, and in the *Roman de Merlin* he is never lost sight of. After the beginning, when he is identified with the chaplain-confessor of Merlin's mother, he takes little part in the action, save as the constant recipient of Merlin's intimate accounts of the conduct of affairs in Britain. The romance-writer tells us that "cil Blayses estoit moult boins clers & soutis," and that it was at Merlin's request he undertook to compile a book of all the "aventures" of the land in their days. Merlin bade him procure ink and parchment and promised to convey him matter which he could get

from no one else. He would often come to him, he said, and tell him all he needed for his great work, which would be more praised than any other " uie de royaus ne de sages," bringing him in this life " acomplicement de cuer " (happy Blaise!) and in the life to come joy everlasting. " Biaus Maistres Blaises " dwelt in Northumberland and there the national leader (for so he practically was — " li maistres conseillers le roy Artu ") came over and over again to sojourn with him, and to discuss events of the present and future. The "preudome" Blaise always welcomed Merlin, his "biaus dous amis," with great joy, " car moult lauoit desire a ueoir & il lui." *

" Lors li dist Merlins toutes les choses que li estoient auenues puis quil sen parti de lui & li contoit comment li Sesne estoient entre en la terre as barons & comment il les guerroient. *Et Blaise mist tout che en escrit & par lui le sauons nous encore.*" † Such statements about Blaise and his book almost always include the formula " par lui (li, lequel) nous le savons encore," the purpose of the author of the *Roman* being, exactly like that of the author of the *Wallace* with respect to his narrative, to establish the impression that the history of Britain in Arthur's days depended solely on the records of Master Blaise, these being taken down " mot a mot " from Merlin himself.‡

The picture of Master Blaise taking down the sole authoritative narrative of Merlin's deeds from his own lips evidently appealed to the illuminators of the Middle Ages, for there are several miniatures in the manuscript subscribed: "Ensi que Merlins fait escrire .j. liure plain de merueilles a Blase sen clerc," * and the like. One had only to thumb the pages of the romance to have the situation fixed in one's mind.

Furthermore, "Blase's books" were mentioned by chroniclers. Robert of Brunne, in a passage concerning Merlin in his *Story of England*, remarks:

> Þenne seyde Merlyn many thynges,
> What y þis lond schuld tide of kynges,
> Þat are in Blase bokes write, —
> Þey þat hauyt, mowe hit wyte, —
> And in Tolomer & sire Amytayn;
> Þyse hadde Merlynes bokes playn,
> ffor þyse þre write his prophecyes,
> And were his maistres in ser partyes.†

What Merlin said about happenings to British kings was written in a Latin book by Master Blase. "They that have it, may it wit!" What Thomas Rhymer said about Wallace and the British kings of his days was written in a Latin book by Master Blare. "They that have it, may it wit!"

Whether mediaeval readers took Master Blaise seriously or not, we cannot say for certain. No modern scholar, at any rate, has regarded him

otherwise than as an imaginary figure.* He is too strikingly parallel a person to Master Blair to permit us to believe that the Wallace-poet was not thinking of him when he invented his own recondite authority. Blaise (Blase), to be sure, is not absolutely identical with Blair (Blare).† The two names differ by the difference of an *s* and an *r;* but that is of small account. Accepting the idea of Master Blaise, it would have been as natural as judicious for the poet to make this name of Wallace's supposed chaplain more Scottish in appearance,‡ and the form Blair would inevitably occur to him at once. But why *John* Blair ? A fact cited by Mr. Brown § provides us with an easy explanation. One "Magister John Blare" was a king's chaplain at the Scottish court in Blind Harry's time, and (in 1467) was given a robe by royal authority "*pro scriptura unius libri dicti Mandevile.*" This is a precious bit of information. The Wallace-poet had evidently read the voyages of Sir John Mandevile before he wrote his own envoy, in which he asserts that he had done his "diligence,"

> Eftyr the pruff geyffyn fra the Latyn buk
> Quhilk Maister Blayr in his tym wndertuk
> In fayr Latyn compild it till ane end.

For he continues, in words that point directly to Mandevile's final paragraph:

With thir witnes the mar is to commend.
Byshop Synclar than lord was off Dunkell,
He gat this buk, and *confermd it him sell*
For werray trew; thar off he had no dreid,
Himselff had seyn gret part off Wallace deid.
His purpos was for till haue send it to Rom,
Our fadyr off kyrk tharon to gyff his dom.

Sir John Mandevile (or rather Jean de Bourgogne, *dit à la barbe;* for he, like the author of the *Wallace*, wrote under an assumed name) tells us similarly in his closing words what he did to promote belief in his fabulous book when once it was "compyled." *

"For as much," he says, "as many men beleve not that they see with theyr eyen or that they may conceive and know in their mynde, therefore I made my way to Rome in my coming homewarde to shew my boke to the holy father the Pope and tell hym of the mervayles that I had sene in diverse countreys; so that he with his wise counsel wold examine it, with diverse folke that are at Rome, for there dwell men of all nations of the world, and a lytle time after when he and his counsel had examined it all through, *he sayde to me for a certayne that it was true*, for he sayd he had a *boke of Latyn* contayning all that and much more, of the which *Mappa Mundi* is made, the which boke I saw, and therefore the Pope hath ratyfied and *confirmed* my boke in all poyntes."

It is curious to find the author of the *Wallace* thus following the lead of Mandevile, for his own book is to be placed in the same category of narrative imposture, covered with a thin veil of pretension to recondite authority. Geoffrey of Monmouth's History and Sir John Mandevile's Voyages were apparently books of a kind that a man of his temperament would desire to have " at his beddes heed." His taste was not singular. No narrators of the Middle Ages compared in vogue with these two writers of fiction. He and they together form an incomparable trio. By no others, perhaps, have readers ever been more willingly led away from the strait and narrow path of fact. We may well doff our hats to these men's power of imagination. But perhaps it would be just as well in a future edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography* to remove altogether the curious account of Master Blair there given, as far from truth perhaps as the *Wallace* itself, but set down with no intent to deceive.

Master Blaise, in his turn, one may conjecture, is no other than Master Blihis,* the mysterious authority for much Arthurian fiction, including the story of the Grail and its mysteries, the " famosus fabulator Bledhericus " of whom Giraldus Cambrensis speaks, and who, under the name Breri, is cited by the Anglo-Norman poet Thomas as the

most trustworthy source of information about Tristram.

> Ky solt les gestes e les cuntes
> De toz les reis, de toz les cuntes
> Ki orent esté en Bretaingne.

There must have been many "masters" of the sort. Master Blair reminds one further of Master Brogan, St. Patrick's supposed scribe, who recorded Caeilte's wonderful tales. "'Success and benediction, Caeilte!' Patrick cried, 'and where is Brogan? be that tale written down by thee, so that to the chiefs of the world's latter time it prove a diversion.' And Brogan penned it." *

Thanks to Master Blair and Blind Harry, William Wallace has become one of the most famed of Scottish chiefs of the world's latter time, and the narrative of his exploits has proved a diversion to many — "recreation of spirit and mind," † such as St. Patrick found the tales of Caeilte.

CHAPTER X

The Wallace as History

> A Scotchman must be a very
> sturdy moralist who does not
> love Scotland better than truth.
>
> Dr. Johnson

THE nature of the *Wallace* and the cause of its permanent influence become clearer when we consider the poet's method of make-believe and the way his work was treated by learned historians. In these respects the *Wallace* presents a striking parallel to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, a book which, despite its obvious inventions, has been taken seriously by multitudes, and been gravely argued about by historians, during the bewilderingly long period of over seven hundred and fifty years since it was launched upon a world fain to believe.

Immediately after his book appeared, sober historians like William of Malmesbury set down Geoffrey's statements as "fallacious fables" and "ridiculous figments." "He disguised," said William of Newbury, "with the honest name of history the fables about Arthur taken from the old tales of the Britons with increase of his own."

Giraldus Cambrensis soon after grew witty at Geoffrey's expense, as appears from the following amusing story:

"A certain Meilerius, having always an extraordinary familiarity with unclean spirits, by seeing them, knowing them, talking with them, and calling each by his proper name, was enabled through their assistance to foretell future events. . . . He knew when any one spoke falsely in his presence, for he saw the devil as it were leaping and exulting on the tongue of the liar. If the evil spirits oppressed him too much, the Gospel of St. John was laid on his bosom, when like birds they immediately vanished away. But when that book was removed, and the History of the Britons by Geoffrey Arthur, for the sake of experiment, substituted in its stead, they settled in far greater numbers and for a much longer time than usual, not only upon his entire body, but on the book that was placed upon it." *

Such protests, however, were unable to stem the tide of popular belief in the glorious king which soon surged on all the intellectual shores of Europe; and, though they might gravely question this or that feature of Geoffrey's account, most mediaeval chroniclers calmly accepted in general his attitude towards Arthur, while they deemed true beyond cavil his narrative of the Trojan Brutus, illustrious head of Britain's royal line.

Almost exactly at the same time that Blind Harry wrote, in 1485, Caxton indicated, in his preface to Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, the kind of controversy that was still being carried on respecting Arthur. When certain noble gentlemen urged him to print a history of that monarch, prominent among the Nine Worthies of the world, he pointed out to them that "divers men hold opinion that there was no such Arthur, and that all such books as been made of him be but feigned and fables, because that some chronicles make of him no mention, nor remember him nothing, nor of his knights. Whereto they answered, and one in special said, that in him that should say or think that there was never such a king called Arthur, might well be aretted great folly and blindness. For he said that there were many evidences of the contrary." The evidences of Arthur's existence which Caxton goes on to enumerate are not such as would convince an historian to-day, unless he longed for conviction, but they were strong enough to persuade the printer that it was worth while to "draw briefly into English the noble histories of the said King" and leave his readers to decide what was true and what false. "And for to pass the time this book shall be pleasant to read in, but for to give faith and belief that all is true that is contained herein, ye be at your liberty." In any case, he

felt, the *Morte d'Arthur* was a noble book of example.

Caxton's attitude resembles that of Henry Charteris, who published the *Wallace* in 1570, and in a long preface to the Gentle Reader * thus explained his position towards the poem: "As I do not be the furthsetting . . . of this warke, following, preciselie affirme, the haill contentis thairof, to be of ane infallibill treuth: Swa do I na thing less than allow the judgement and opinioun of them, that rashlie, and at the first sicht, dois dampne the samin, or maist pairt thairof, as friuoll, and fenzeit. And that becaus thair is sum strange, and meruellous thingis conteinit thairin, quhilk scarcely semis can be creditit." Whereupon he discusses at length the reasonableness of certain episodes in the poem, particularly the story of Fawdoun's ghost, and the journeys to France, and gives proofs of Wallace's existence.

Such hedging remained characteristic of Scottish critics. The *Wallace* has never been accepted by them as a fully authentic account of the hero's life, but nearly all have tried to credit as much of it as possible, wish begetting belief that Blind Harry was largely right.

The tone of the long line of comments was really set by Major. After inveighing against Caxton for the "incoherencies" and "silly fabrications" of

his English account of Wallace, Major assumes his regular academic air and rebukes "native chroniclers" for their injudicious treatment of the theme. Blind Harry, whom he here mentions by name, was obviously the source of the fables he then repudiates, as follows: "About this William Wallace our chroniclers in the English tongue relate that he twice visited France. They tell of his having had a sea-fight with Thomas Longueville, a French pirate, and John Lyn, an Englishman, and of many other notable feats of his they make mention, which I reject as false; and my rejection of them I base, firstly, hereon, that our Latin chroniclers relate nothing that he did of any mark after Varia Capella [Falkirk], but give us to understand that he then went into hiding; and, in the second place, I reject them inasmuch as the French histories make mention of Scots of far less renown in war than Wallace, and say scarce one word about him. I conclude, therefore, that he never visited France." But Major never concluded anything finally, and so, after much learned argument, he ends: "I am reluctant nevertheless to deny absolutely, on the ground of such reasons as I have ventured to state, that he never saw the shores of France" — which was very shrewd.*

The questioning attitude of Major towards Blind Harry was altogether commendable, and we

should praise him for it whole-heartedly were it not for the fact that he quietly appropriated various features of the chronicler's narrative otherwise unsubstantiated, and presented the " notable deeds " of Wallace of renown, his appearance, prowess and character, so as to confirm that author's original narrative.

Not long after Major, Bellenden, in his paraphrase of Hector Boece (1536), unable to refrain from adding new material about Wallace, whose reputation had so suddenly increased, refers such of his readers as desire further information to Blind Harry's book, but declines to say " if it has any strength of soothfastness or yet of verity," adding: " Therefore as now I lat al sic thingis be." Bellenden must have seen that the author's claims to credence amounted to little. Still, he encouraged the course of the fiction, as numerous other historians have done since.

Skipping nearly three centuries, we come to one worthy of high respect. Patrick Fraser Tytler opens his life of Wallace * in a way that makes one feel he is to be an exception to the general rule, so well does he recognize the dangers attendant on the use of " the rhyming chronicler: " " The brilliant and romantic colours with which the associations of youthful years continue, even in later life, to invest the memory of Wallace, render the task undertaken

by his biographer one of difficult execution and uncertain success. His story, as recounted by Henry the Minstrel, has been familiar to his countrymen almost from childhood; and although its marvels must be questioned, and often condemned, by the severity of maturer judgment, there lingers a secret disposition rather to believe what they wish to be true, than to investigate with calmness what they dread to find false."

Yet, having once made humble confession, even he seems to have felt himself absolved from sin in indulging this secret disposition. After reading his splendidly sound prologue to his subject, it is indeed a great disappointment to find that Tytler's life of Wallace, like all the rest, records statements for which he must have known Blind Harry was the sole and a most doubtful authority, and perpetuates incidents of a purely imaginative character, simply because they enlivened his narrative and were the chief means he had of making Wallace out to be, as he avows he conceived him, both in character and actions, "in all respects colossal."*

There can, of course, be no objection to following Blind Harry's work "where corroborated by contemporary annals, or authentic records"; the difficulty rests in the nature and extent of the corroboration. If Blind Harry states facts that authentic records also state, then his poem may be

held to be in so far true, but if on the basis of these facts he spins out a narrative otherwise unsubstantiated, it cannot be argued that this developed narrative is necessarily also true: most of what a writer says about a situation may be fiction when the situation itself is fact. This point seems to have escaped all the biographers of Wallace, or they have thought well to ignore it, the more easily to satisfy their desire to paint an appealing portrait of a celebrated hero. Realizing, as Tytler himself said apologetically in concluding his story, that "the bulk of mankind are ever more captivated by what is wonderful and romantic than interested in truth," they have yielded to the soft inducement of popularity, and deviously accepted from Blind Harry features for the adornment of their pseudo-histories which they could not honestly have said were corroborated by authentic records.

Lord Hailes certainly went far to discredit Blind Harry as an historical authority by exposing some of his "specious tales" and "childish stories." * But there came an inevitable reaction from his heterodox attitude the moment there was a straw of new evidence for Blind Harry's supporters to cling to. Much was done to reinstate his poem among trustworthy documents when Joseph Stevenson published his volume of *Wallace Papers* † for the Maitland Club in 1841.

"Is it a fair inference," he asks, "because some errors are found in a poem, containing several thousand of lines, written by a blind and ignorant versifier, and in a poem, too, handed down for a long period by recitation, that the whole is utterly worthless? The present collection of documents places this subject in a new and interesting position; for it shows us that those very particulars, which, from their romantic character, were supposed to be fictitious, and which contributed to throw discredit upon the whole production, are, in reality, genuine and authentic history." And again (apropos of a record showing that Wallace visited France and perhaps Rome): "It is interesting to notice how the authentic details in this volume here bear out, *to a great degree*, the wild romance of Blind Harry." *

All we can say is: we disagree. No one questions that Wallace visited France. Major forgot when he disputed the fact that this was asserted in the *Scotichronicon*. But no document that Stevenson or any one else has published confirms in a small let alone a great degree *Blind Harry's* account of Wallace's visits to France. That is certainly nothing but "a wild romance," entirely unjustified by any authentic historical record.

It is one thing to apologize for Blind Harry's inaccurate statements and ask all to treat his errors

with lenity, like Irving, because of "his own situation and the state of learning during that age,"* or, like Chambers, because of "the unlettered character of the author and the comparative humility of the class from whom he could chiefly derive his facts." † It is another to go on, knowing that it was the practice of the poet to make inaccurate statements, and eliminate only those that are grotesquely untrue, or to assert that if the "fundamentals" of some of his stories are verified by "little morsels of evidence" ‡ that have turned up, the stories themselves as the poet gives them are in any real sense worthy of belief.

"A blind and ignorant versifier" might unquestioningly report reliable facts; "a poem handed down for a long period by recitation" might even more easily perpetuate reliable facts; but the *Wallace* in its present form was neither composed by a blind and ignorant versifier nor handed down for a long period by recitation. Without question Blind Harry used current traditions respecting his hero, but his poem may in an ample sense be called an "invention"; the author was a *fabulator*, quite insensitive to accusations of untruth.

Major did well to call attention to the unflattering opinions of contemporary Englishmen regarding Scotland as a warning to his countrymen to

advance only the truth. Robert of Brunne, following Pers de Langtoft, calls Wallace a "master of thieves," and Caxton describes him as "a rybaud and an harlot, comen up of nought." Major thought these were "silly fabrications." Perhaps they were. But it does no good to encourage prejudice by other "silly fabrications." Wallace has enough to commend him on the basis of veritable achievement.

This is not the place to examine in detail Blind Harry's record of events. That has already been admirably done by Dr. Francis Lane Childs in the unpublished Harvard dissertation already mentioned, and I have no wish to trespass on his ground or anticipate his conclusions. However, I may say that they strongly fortify the opinion of recent Scottish scholars, particularly that of Mr. George Neilson, who asserts that "as history the poem is the veriest nightmare." * The *Wallace* is so plainly under suspicion throughout that it should never be regarded in any way as an independent historical source. Surely it is time to give over talking about its "inaccuracies," "blunders," "mistakes," "errors," and the like, because these words as used imply innocency of intent on the part of the poet. Why not do him justice by declining to judge his poem from the standpoint of the chronicler?

It is interesting to note that, not far from the time when Blind Harry celebrated William Wallace as the preëminent champion of the Scots in their wars of independence, William Tell was similarly exalted and made the ideal of Swiss patriots in their struggle against Austria. Melchior Russ of Lucerne, who began his chronicle in 1482, refers to an earlier ballad of "the first Confederate," and narrates certain of his exploits. In a short chronicle of about 1470, the Tell story and the atrocities of the tyrannical bailiffs are first found combined. "Der Thäll," that is, the simpleton of popular fable, who corresponds to the Tokko of Saxo Grammaticus and the William of Cloudesley of English ballads, was curiously transformed into an immortal champion of Swiss rights — "assertor patriae, vindex ultorque tyrannum." * "The general result [of recent investigations] has been to show that a mythological marksman and an impossible bailiff bearing the name of a real family [Gessler] have been joined with confused and distorted reminiscences of the events of 1245–47, in which the names of many real persons have been inserted and many unauthenticated acts attributed to them. . . . The alleged proofs of the existence of a real William Tell in Uri in the fourteenth century break down hopelessly." †

Scots, no less than others, have been willing to profit by literary impostures, as is evident from Macpherson's *Ossian*, which called forth Dr. Johnson's caustic comment quoted at the head of this chapter,* or the ballad of *Hardyknute*, which Ritson rightly termed a "palpable and bungling forgery." † Of a Scottish family,‡ and certainly acquainted with Ossian, probably also with Blind Harry, was an American historian who has had an immense influence in fashioning the fame of George Washington — Parson Weems.

In 1800 the Reverend Mason L. Weems, pastor of a church near Mt. Vernon, Virginia, issued a Life of Washington, which went through over forty editions, and is popular still. In the second edition appeared for the first time the cherry-tree episode with which all American boys are early made familiar. Of Weems Mr. Sydney G. Fisher has excellently said: "It is in vain that the historians, the exhaustive investigators, the learned, and the accurate rail at him or ignore him. He is inimitable. He will live forever. He captured the American people. He was the first to catch their ear. He said exactly what they wanted to hear. He has been read a hundred times more than all the other historians and biographers of the Revolution put together. He fastened his methods so firmly upon the country that the learned historians

must, in their own dull and lifeless way, conform as far as possible to his ideas or they will be neither read nor tolerated.

"Out of the social, genial, card-playing, fox-hunting Washington, Weems manufactured the sanctimonious wooden image, the Sunday school lay figure, which Washington still remains for most of us, in spite of all the learned efforts of Owen Wister, Senator Lodge and Paul Leicester Ford. Weems was a myth-maker of the highest rank and skill and the greatest practical success. Of the Revolution itself he made a Homeric and Biblical combat of giants, titans and mammoths against the unfathomable corruption and wickedness of about a dozen dragons and fiends calling themselves King and Ministry in England."

"Reckless in statement, indifferent to facts and research, his books are full of popular heroism, religion and morality, which you at first call trash and cant and then, finding it extremely entertaining, you declare with a laugh, as you lay down the book, what a clever rogue." *

One comes to much the same conclusion after a close study of the *Wallace* as history. After one has been convinced that the author had a different object in writing the book from that of narrating real events, and that he succeeded marvellously in what he undertook to do — stirring the people

to defence of their realm — one ceases to inveigh against his fabrications. The *Wallace* is of first importance as an historical document just because it perverted facts.

Not in the mood of a parson, still less of a ferocious Gael, but in that of a genial inventor, resembling Geoffrey of Monmouth, another American writer wrote a fabulous " History " of great influence — Washington Irving.

The legend of Blind Harry, who was long in faery, is fundamentally not unlike that of Rip van Winkle, who consorted with dead men in the mountains, and there passed twenty years which seemed to him but one night. Regarding his account of Rip's adventures, Irving wrote slily in a preface:

" The following tale was found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker, an old gentleman of New York, who was very curious in the Dutch history of the province, and the manners of the descendants from its primitive settlers. His historical researches, however, did not lie so much among books, as among men; for the former are lamentably scanty on his favorite topics; whereas he found the old burghers, and still more their wives, rich in that legendary lore so invaluable to a true history. Whenever, therefore, he happened upon a genuine Dutch family, snugly shut-

up in its low-roofed farmhouse, under a spreading sycamore, he looked upon it as a little clasped volume of black letter, and studied it with the zeal of a bookworm.

" The result of all these researches was a history of the province, during the reign of the Dutch governors, which he published some years since. There have been various opinions as to the literary character of his work, and, to tell the truth, it is not a whit better than it should be. Its chief merit is its scrupulous accuracy which, indeed, was a little questioned on its first appearance, but has since been completely established; and it is now admitted into all historical collections, as a book of unquestionable authority."

If Irving had represented Rip van Winkle as the author of his *History of New York*, he would have acted precisely like the author of the *Wallace*. But he had already made himself famous under the name of Diedrich Knickerbocker. One has only to read Knickerbocker's charming narrative with the *Wallace* in mind, to be struck by how much they have in common, in method of composition as well as in resultant influence.* We lack, to be sure, all account of Blind Harry in his poem, because he wrote in person, while Knickerbocker's appearance is made quite clear to us by Irving, the supposed editor, but we see equally plainly in both cases the

reason for the pseudonym. That Irving never expected to have his work taken as literally true, and that he was himself amazed at its success, is apparent from the "Author's Apology" which he printed forty years after the History first appeared. Though it would be illuminating to reproduce the whole of that apology here, space permits of only the concluding words:

"I please myself," says Irving, "with the persuasion that I have struck the right chord; that my dealings with the good old Dutch times, and the customs and usages derived from them, are in harmony with the feelings and humors of my townsmen; that I have opened a vein of pleasant associations and quaint characteristics peculiar to my native place, and which its inhabitants will not willingly suffer to pass away; and that, though other histories of New York may appear of higher claims to learned acceptation, and may take their dignified and appropriate rank in the family library Knickerbocker's history will still be received with good-humored indulgence, and be thumbed and chuckled over by the family fireside."

If the name of Knickerbocker, a hundred and more years after he appeared as an American author, is still familiar to countless folk who do not know that he was a fictitious personage, the same may be said of Blind Harry, equally fictitious,

who, over four hundred years after his appearance as a Scottish author, continues a name to conjure with. Thousands repeat enlivening features of his account of the national hero without realizing their essential untruth. For the most part, however, they are not acquainted with the whole story and do not realize that as a whole (to quote Mr. Neilson) " it requires an almost deranged patriotism to accept as worthy of the noble memory of Sir William Wallace so vitiated a tribute." Happily the time is past when a publisher of the poem * could suggest that the concluding words of the *Scotichronicon* might be " in some respect, peculiarly applicable to Henry's Book."

> Non Scotus est, Christe, cui non liber placet iste.
> He is not a Scotsman whom this Book does not please.

" I believe," said Isocrates, " that the poetry of Homer won greater glory because he nobly praised those who warred against the barbarians, and that this was the reason why our ancestors conceived the desire to make his art honored both in the contests of the Muses and in the training of young men." The *Wallace* is not a great epic. It does not deal with a very remote hero. It bears on its face the stamp of individual invention. But it was an astonishingly successful incentive to patriotism, and this because the author so skilfully gathered

up floating traditions and welded them together to foment war against an alien enemy. We shall never be able to judge how great was the effect of his putting his narrative into the mouth of a mysterious blind bard. It subtly gave the poem an almost supernatural authority, and evoked a background of Homeric suggestion that lingers still.

CHAPTER XI

Blind Harry and Blind Homer

> Neither am I ignorant how fickle and inconstant a thing fiction is, as being subject to be drawn and wrested any way, and how great the commodity of wit and discourse is, that is able to apply things well, yet so as never meant by its first authors.
>
> Bacon

IT has always been the custom of critics to name one poet after some other among predecessors in his art, who, by a process of transmigration of souls, as it were, might be fancied to live again in a modern descendant.* Major who, it will be remembered, referred to King James as "a second Orpheus," hinted at the likeness, obvious by misapprehension, between Blind Harry and Blind Homer. That he did not go the full length of his thought and openly call Blind Harry "a second Homer" was probably due simply to the disrespect he felt for vernacular verse, except such as was written elegantly by illustrious personages, and to his inherited, overpowering reverence for the great bard of antiquity. "Quis in scriptis Homero

major" ? asked Walter Map. "Quegli è Omero poeta sovrano," wrote Dante. There was unanimity of opinion in the Middle Ages as to Homer's greatness, even among those who had not read him,* and no one then doubted that the real author of the glorious epics that went under his name was really blind. The first edition of a Greek Homer was published at Florence, by Demetrius Chalcondylas, in 1488, almost synchronously with the appearance of Blind Harry's *Wallace*, and it is no wonder that the two poets were connected. Dunbar, in his *Goldyn Targe*, a poem spiced as thick with classical references as a ham with cloves, refers to Homer and his "ornate style so perfect," along with Tully, whose "lips sweet of rhetoric" he wished were his. The Wallace-poet likewise admired the aureate tongues the old poets were figured to possess, and, as we have seen, adorned his tale with as rich robes of rhetoric as it would bear. When Macpherson came to write of Ossian, he made that blind ancient echo phrases of Homer. Possibly, knowledge of the eyeless bard of the Greeks may have encouraged the author of the *Wallace* in the use of his pseudonym.

Though Major apparently balked at frankly reincarnating Homer in "Henricus caecus" (he perhaps suspected he should have been laughed at by his Parisian colleagues if he had done so), he

enforced the likeness enough to make it natural for a less cautious reader to rush in where he had feared to tread and suggest a resemblance between the actual authors of the *Wallace* and the *Iliad*. "Another Homer," soon exclaimed the ecclesiastical Dempster,* gratified by his own shrewdness in catching the point of Major's veiled remarks, and praised Blind Harry extravagantly for his "operose and grand work." The comparison henceforth became inevitable among critics, though some took Dempster to task for pushing it so far. Thus, in the introduction to Morison's print of the *Wallace* in 1790, we read: "Henry, as Homer is said to have done, recited his verses, which were of a patriotic kind, to the people among whom he travelled. In any other respect, it must be owned, it was rather ridiculous to say he was another Homer. He was blind from his birth, which Homer was not, who is supposed to have become blind in the latter part of his life, chiefly from the meaning of his name, which name can admit of other interpretations."

It was, of course, the supposed blindness of Blind Harry that chiefly justified and kept alive the parallel. To men like Ambrose Philips, "Homer was nothing more than a blind ballad-singer." † Blackwell, in his *Life of Homer*,‡ dwelt upon the advantages of the wandering life to a

poet, arguing that " Homer's being born poor, and living a strolling indigent bard, was in relation to his poetry, the greatest happiness that could befall him." And Irving, in his *Lives of the Scottish Poets*,* applied Blackwell's views to Blind Harry, adding: " If we consider it as the production of a man blind from his birth, his heroic poem cannot fail of ranking him among the most remarkable characters commemorated in the annals of literature." Whereupon he quotes from Ellis: † " That a man *born* blind should excel in any science, is sufficiently extraordinary, though by no means without example; but that he should become an excellent poet is almost miraculous; because the soul of poetry is description. Perhaps, therefore, it may be safely assumed, that Henry was not inferior, in point of genius, either to Barbour or Chaucer; nor indeed to any poet of any age or country; but it is our present business to estimate the merit of the work, rather than the genius of the author." In all this we have a clear echo of the great discussion of Homer by Edward Young, William Duff, Robert Wood, and others, the Greek bard being to them the chief example of " original genius."

How a strolling indigent bard could have come by his culture has, indeed, been debated almost as persistently of Harry as of Homer, and scholars even before the time of Wolf (1795), but still more

since, have discussed in the one case as in the other how a blind man, or any author before the age of writing, was physically able to compose such long and carefully-wrought poems as those with which they were credited. Josephus declared that the works of Homer were not preserved in writing, but were sung and retained by memory. Henry Morley thought the *Wallace* might possibly have been written from Blind Harry's dictation, "or from the memory of parts of it by other minstrels who recited this or that adventure out of it among the people." * No matter how preserved, there are critics still who hold that its composition was "a wonderful effort of memory." †

Such are the reaches of criticism. The *Wallace* question has run parallel to the Homeric question even to theories of interpolation and collaboration, as the summary of opinion in the first chapter has shown, while reminiscential comment on "the blind old Scottish Homer of the fifteenth century" ‡ continues, even in this the twentieth. In the *Cambridge History of English Literature* § we find: "From Major's account it is clear that Harry belonged to the class of wandering minstrels who recited, like Homer of old, the deeds of heroes to their descendants. . . . There is nothing in Harry, any more than in Homer, to show that the author was born blind. On the contrary, some of his de-

scriptions seem to show considerable powers of observation." * And Dr. Garnett, after quoting Major, wrote: † "He [Henry the Minstrel] was, therefore, a rhapsodist,‡ and Homeric in other particulars than his blindness. . . . There is no doubt of his privation of sight, but the evidence of culture in his poems, including traces of Chaucer, indicate that before his affliction he must have employed his eyes in study. According to his own statement, indeed, his poem is mainly founded upon a Latin biography of Wallace, now lost, by his chaplain, John or Arnold Blair."

To recapitulate, then, concerning the poet's blindness: Major stated that Harry was blind from birth, and this, being the sole evidence on the point, has of course remained the orthodox view. Those who have held it agree that the fact of blindness from birth constituted him one of the world's wonders; but Major said so, the poet's name bore it out, and there was for them therefore no escape; a miracle was a miracle. Those nowadays who, denying Major's evidence at will, maintain that he only later became blind, argue merely on the basis of antecedent probability. They contend that the poet's descriptions of natural scenes would be impossible for a blind man, and so on. Besides, he has to be given a chance to learn to read Blair's Latin book! Those, finally, who are

convinced that the work was not written by a blind man hold that Harry was not its author.

Now, this is not merely the modern sort of argument about Homer but exactly the kind that went on formerly with regard to him. In antiquity nothing really was known of Homer. In early times his blindness was assumed,* for example, by Thucydides, — who accepted the Hymn to the Delian Apollo as Homeric, and must therefore (according to verse 172) have counted him blind, — and by Aristophanes, who also quotes it as Homeric. The etymology of his name by Ephorus † also presumes belief in his blindness. Whether he was blind from birth was at first not asked. Later, some writers declared that he was, obviously to enhance the wonder. Cicero, however, seems to have questioned how, if so, the vividness of his descriptions was to be explained. Ephorus and Heraclides thought that he was not blind from birth, and the latter (as well as Pausanias) indicated circumstances under which his affliction was brought about. Lucian denied his blindness altogether. Some gave credit to Pisistratus and others for the collection and arrangement of his poems.‡

Blind Harry mentions a knight, Sir Richard Wallace, blinded " through courage " in a struggle against the English; § whereupon his editor, Dr. Moir, felt constrained to note: " When Harry in-

troduces this blind hero, he says nothing of his own blindness, any more than Homer does when he introduces his blind bard in the 8th Odyssey. Contrast with this reticence Milton's noble passage in the beginning of the third book of 'Paradise Lost.' Harry is in this respect more true to the epic spirit than Milton is." How irrelevant is this remark if the author of the *Wallace* was not blind at all! Mayhap the Greek Homer anticipated the Scottish Homer in "reticence" for the same reason. But Dr. Moir probably simply remembered that even in antiquity Homer was said to have pictured himself as Demodocus. The parallel treatment of Blind Harry with Homer illustrates for our instruction, how in modern criticism of a modern poet the same things have been fancied as were fancied in ancient criticism of an ancient poet, and this not simply because the Hall of Criticism is notoriously a hall of echoes, but because conventions of thought are regularly established by reminiscence.

Henceforth we shall probably hear no more about the Wallace-poet as a rhapsodist. That ghost is surely laid. But the present inquiry would be unenlightened if it did not lead to the perception that Blind Harry and Blind Homer *as traditional figures* have something in common; and with that idea we shall now deal.

The ancients knew as little as we about Homer. At no time had the Greeks any consistent or authentic biography of him. He was assigned by them a date anywhere from 1159 B.C. (that given him by some authorities quoted in Philostratus) to 686 B.C. (that given him by the historian Theopompus).* The oldest evidence put the poet simply in the time of the Trojan War. His father was said to be a contemporary of Priam. Seven, even seventeen, cities claimed to be his birthplace, all the way from Ithaca to Colophon.

Not until the sixth century B.C. does interest appear to have been aroused in Homer as a person. But then many inventions arose, in part due to the contest of the cities which declared themselves to be his birthplace and sedulously adduced proofs in support of their claims. The poet's journeys were held to be established by his great geographical knowledge. He was said to have visited cities that were particularly praised in his poems. He was brought into connection with well-known men of olden time like Hesiod, Lycurgus, Medon, Creophylus, and with minor persons in the epics. Steadily his legendary life grew from more to more. We are told of his stay in Ithaca because of his love for Penelope, of his Egyptian or Babylonian origin, of the conjuring of spirits and the prophecies of sibyls. Perhaps the most important

features of his storied biography was an extraordinary dispute with Hesiod in Chalcis. According to one account, the poet died of grief, like Calchas after his defeat by Mopsus, because he could not solve a riddle. Eugaion gives him as mother a nymph Cretheis. According to Alexander of Paphos his nurse was the daughter of Horus, a priest of Isis; out of her breast flowed honey. He is said to have known the language of birds. No one in antiquity ever tried to paint an individual portrait of Homer — for obvious reasons.

If we assume Blind Homer to be a strictly historical figure, then the many mythical features of his ancient biography must of necessity be deemed spurious accretions and disregarded. But if we start with the assumption that he was originally a figure of fiction, like Blind Ossian, a general pseudonym for those who wrote the Greek poems of the ancients, then the mythical traditions that attach to him may be regarded as the varying myths about other similar bards, and we must deem misleading the efforts of old euhemerizers to make him out a human being like unto themselves, according to their desires.

It is not so long ago that Ossian, about whom so much fable clings, was accepted as an historical personage, a genuine leader of armed militia in ancient Erin. The true pedigree of his father Finn

was supposed to be set forth in the *Book of Leinster*, and his death to have surely occurred in 283 A.D. But while politic persons, in deference to popular prejudice, still admit that "it is possible" that the Fians of story once lived, few Celtic scholars now treat them as other than mythical beings. In any case, "it is certain," as Alfred Nutt says, "that 99–100ths of what is ascribed to them bears no relation whatever to historic fact, but is simply older myth slightly humanized, or new invention on the lines of older myth." * And we need not worry about the "possibility" of the other one hundredth having some basis in fact. The "it is possible" compromise of the politic, here as in other cases, has really been worked to the limits of sense, modern critics sometimes making confusion worse confounded in their anxious endeavors to unravel the skein of legend, and separate in matter fundamentally fabulous the true from the false. "The art of transforming untrue impossibilities into untrue possibilities." † is surely profitless.

The Scandinavians have gone beyond the Celts in a proper view of their old myths. In the North, by common consent, the old gods and heroes are for the most part relegated to the domain of fable. This, however, was not always the case, and it is illuminating to see how Odin, the wind-god, the

god of battle, the god of song and wisdom, who was plausibly identified by classical writers with Mercury, was gravely chronicled as an ancestor of the royal line of Norway by no less a person than Snorri Sturluson, one of the most brilliant historians in the world. Though, according to Snorri, Odin was "foreseeing and wise in wizardry," though "he knew the art and craft whereby he could change his hue and shape in any wise that he would," though "in battle he could make his foes blind or deaf or fear-stricken," though "he could wake up dead men from the earth," and "had might to know the fate of men and things not yet come to pass," nevertheless we find him presented in the opening of the *Heimskringla* as an historical monarch who ruled in Asia (As-gard being so interpreted),* and had we only Snorri's narrative, it would be open to any one to maintain that the fabulous was merely an accretion to the record of a real person, or that two persons, one real and one fabulous, had got confused, even as Tzetzes postulated more than one Homer to account for the poet's supposed dispute with Hesiod.†

This last is what is actually asserted of Bragi, the Old Norse god of poetry. In the Eddic lays ‡ he appears as the son of Odin, the best of skalds, an old man (*inn gamli*) with a long white beard.

His wife is Idunn, a goddess, who keeps the apples of immortality.* In a section of the prose *Edda* that bears his name, the *Bragarœthr*, or Sayings of Bragi, he is represented as telling the sea-god Ægir how the kennings arose out of old myths and sagas. And yet, with curious perversity, excellent scholars maintain that this was all an afterthought. Bragi to them is the first provable skald. He lived in the ninth century. He went about from court to court and composed songs in praise of princes.† But gradually his human life and activity were forgotten; he became the prototype of all courtly skalds; he was made the god of poetry. That, however, is not the way of such processes. Bragi the Old is probably no more a real skald than Brig(it), the Irish goddess of poetry, whose name became celebrated as that of a saint, and the poems that pass under his name were no doubt ascribed to him as similar poems were ascribed to Ossian and the rest, merely to give them currency. Like all the poems put into the mouths of mythical bards, Bragi's dealt with old events, as for example with the story of Gefion, who aided by her four sons, begotten by a giant, ploughed herself a land, Selund, the modern Denmark, separate from Sweden — a story that Snorri amusingly rationalizes and makes occur in Odin's time, when that chieftain had lands in Turkey!

It seems almost incredible that Snorri, who knew the real myths of the *Elder Edda*, could have permitted himself to repeat such absurdities from the point of view of the historian as he put in the *Ynglingasaga*, his only justification being that he here followed "olden songs, or story-lays, which men have had for their joyance," and "though we wot not surely the truth thereof, yet this we know for a truth, that men of lore of old time have ever held such lore for true." * But this was not much more than was done by Milton in his treatment of the Trojan story in the *History of Britain;* "It is curious," says Tylor,† "to watch Milton's mind emerging, but not wholly emerging, from the state of the mediaeval chronicler. He mentions in the beginning of his 'History of Britain,' the 'outlandish figment' of the four kings, Magus, Saron, Druis, and Bardus; he has no approval for the giant Albion, son of Neptune, who subdued the island and called it after his own name; he scoffs at the four sons of Japhet, called Francus, Romanus, Alemannus, and Britto. But when he comes to Brutus and the Trojan legend, his sceptical courage fails him: 'those old and inborn names of successive kings, never any to have bin real persons, or don in their lives at least som part of what so long hath bin remember'd, cannot be thought without too strict an incredulity.'"

The material that Milton used in his *History* he knew to be mainly fable, but he stilled his conscience by the conviction that its preservation would be useful to poets, much as Plato justified transforming tales of mythology in the interest of morals; "because we do not know the truth about ancient times, we make falsehood as much like truth as we can, and so turn it to account." * Such lying Plato thought "useful and not hateful," comparing it with the lie to deceive enemies, or that to prevent friends from doing harm in a fit of madness or illusion. The methods of modern scholars, we may note, are not very different. Some strain their own credulity to sustain desire, willingly repeating notions which they know to be unfounded yet are unable to prove false, or are loath to see die; while others perpetuate tradition as tradition, without admitting full belief in it, yet thus lead astray the undiscriminating, who make no shades in credence. Of course, no one can deny that legend attaches to real persons, just as unwarranted miracles are attributed to real saints; but in candor it ought not to be more difficult to distinguish between Homer and Æschylus, or Job and David, than between Odin and Olaf Tryggvason, or St. Brendan and Bede.

The Eddic lays still remain independent in the main of one another. No transcendent poet rose

in the North able to weld them together into fixed epic union. But had such a plan been conceived, it would most likely have been Odin the god of wise-saying who would have become its centre. Even in the *Hávamál*, the Sayings of Harr, as it exists in the manuscripts, we see the tendency to collect material of unlike form about this name. The *Hávamál* embraces what is left of several independent lays conveying ancient wisdom, tales of gods and giants, and magic runes, as well as a body of practical precepts to guide men in everyday life. In one of those lays Odin is figured as telling in person some of his own romantic exploits, but the title of the collection seems to derive from the fiction of representing him as the mouthpiece of wise instruction, the hoary sage delivering his wise saws and old instances (*forn dæmi*) according to the duties of his office. The chief mythological poem of the *Edda* is a "prophecy" put into the mouth of a Sibyl, who in beginning speaks: "Thou Valfather [Odin] wouldst have me tell the ancient histories of men as far as I can remember." Perhaps "Edda," which in the only place where it is used in the old lays * seems to mean "grandmother," may be a term equivalent to Sibyl. Hárr, alias Odin, was pictured as a blind wayfarer, who went about from one place to another singing lays and giving counsel. Had only Old Norse mythologi-

cal material been welded together long enough ago by some great poet who presented it as the words of Hárr, inspired by the Sibyl, we might to-day be wondering what were the actual facts about the life of Blind Hárr, as well as Blind Harry, Blind Ossian, and Blind Homer. Indeed, we have a good illustration of what was natural in the way that Snorri in the thirteenth century makes the framework of his recapitulation of Old Norse mythology, an imaginary conversation between Gangleri, the Wanderer, and Hárr, the High One, in which the latter gives information and relates old tales to his questioner, even as Caeilte does to St. Patrick in the *Colloquy of the Elders*.*

To whom were attributed the beast-fables that are even now current among us? To Æsop, a dwarf because of an offense against the gods,† or to Romulus, fabled founder of Rome, who was carried to heaven by his father Mars in a fiery chariot. Who wrote about the Trojan War? The imagined contemporaries of that event, Dares Phrygius for the one side, Dictys Cretensis for the other. Who was Bishop Golias (Goliath) who had such a wonderful *Apocalypse* and made such a candid *Confession* betraying the former state of the clergy?

No one now will dispute that it was in olden days a custom to use personages of fiction as burden-

bearers of ancient narrative, just as it has always been a custom to use fictitious personages to voice individual thoughts, and that if these personages attracted, they were regularly given more thoughts to utter. Our study here is with imaginary authors and the reason why they were chosen by the real authors whose books went under their illusory names. It is, of course, a very different sort of study to try to arrive at the character and station of these actual poets. We are primarily concerned with the Eddic poems, the Ossianic poems, the Homeric poems, just as we are with *Béowulf*, the *Chanson de Roland*, the *Cid*, the *Nibelungenlied*, and other such anonymous epics, as artistic creations. But we cannot judge them freely until we cease to take seriously as matters of fact deliberate fictions about their authorship. It may be there is not a single old epic whose author's name we really know. Each poem must be studied in the sole light of its own radiance. And there is gain in that, despite the insatiable longing of modern poets for advertisement, and the indefatigable search of modern critics for personalities.

It looks, then, as if Homer were first the name of a mythical or fabricated personage, not unlike Ossian, or Odin, to whom, for some reason or other, was early ascribed much epic material about the ancients of the Greek race, which was finally trans-

formed into noble poems by a transcendent writer. These poems, though they gradually superseded the more primitive, disunited accounts of the old heroes, made no claim to a change of substance, and retained the traditional name. He was only recording, as a Muse, or a Sibyl, or a spirit of the departed, or simply as wise ancestors, advised him, with infinite skill to be sure, but with the impersonal object that epic poets have so often set themselves — to benefit posterity by retelling the deeds of past heroes. It is perhaps no accident that the authors of the (by comparison) recent epic poems, *Béowulf*, and the rest, remain unknown, though each of them, as we have it, is the work of an individual of exceptional power. These writers exalted first the names of their heroes, not their own.

If it is asked why the mythical Homer was pictured as blind, we can give no single definite reply; for even in earliest antiquity his blindness was not understood, or at least not explained in any one way to satisfy all. The numerous attempts at an explanation merely show the minds of men at work making conjectures along the lines of divers traditions due to mythopœic fancy. In the beginning, it is clear, the mythical Homer was thought blind for some *mythical* reason; his blindness was believed to be due to some situation in which the deities were involved. Only later did scholars en-

deavor to rationalize myths already applied to him, or to invent explanations more in accord with natural probability. But throughout antiquity the belief in the inspiration of Homer, and therefore in his connection with divine beings, ever maintained its hold over the Greeks and guided their meditations on the epithet that had come down to them from time immemorial attached to him.

We have already gathered from our consideration of Celtic instances what primitive men in a Homeric state of civilization * felt might result from offending the gods, the givers of the power of song. These narratives, whether borrowed from the Greeks, or of general Aryan origin, were in accord with classical thought. The Celts, as we have seen, believed that otherworld beings had the power to deprive mortals of eyesight when these had aroused their displeasure. They recorded instances of ancients who by luck or favor penetrated to faery, the noble seat of all the arts and sciences, lived long in that elysium, and returned to earth bards, but blind. They felt that their deities were able to bless or blast, or both at the same time, to endow a favorite with magical powers, and yet, offended after he departed from their company, to hide the physical ways he might seek to use to reach again their divine abode, or merely from vindictiveness to plunge him into the misery

of outer darkness. Similar conceptions are behind the statements in Homer regarding the supremely gifted Demodocus. When Alcinous invited that "sacred bard" to entertain Odysseus in the palace, he remarked that "surely God has granted him exceeding skill in song." And the poet went out of his way to explain that the cause of the blindness of Demodocus was the cause of his song: "The Muse had greatly loved him and had given him good and ill; she took away his eyesight, but gave delightful song."

The Muses * in Greek correspond to the faery queens of Celtic tradition. Originally regarded as the nymphs of inspiring wells, near which they were worshipped, they become, in the Homeric poems, the goddesses of song and poetry, and live in Olympus. The powers which we find most frequently assigned to them are that of bringing before the mind of the mortal poet the events which he has to relate; and that of conferring upon him the gift of song, and of giving gracefulness to what he utters. A further feature in the character of the Muses is their prophetic power, which belongs to them, partly because they were regarded as inspiring nymphs, and partly because of their connection with the prophetic god of Delphi.

The Muses, like faery queens, inflicted penalties on those who displeased them. We recall how the

Sirens, who ventured upon a contest with them, were deprived of the feathers of their wings; and how the nine daughters of Pierus, who presumed to rival them, were metamorphosed into birds. But especially interesting to us is the case of the bard Thamyris, who, likewise presuming to excel them, was punished with blindness. In Demodocus and Thamyris, then, we have two mythical Greek bards, once favorites of the Muses, who were afflicted by these same divine ladies with blindness for some offense.

There were, furthermore, many other Greek personages who were afflicted with blindness by a deity, for example Lycurgus, blinded by Zeus because of impiety, therefore "hated by the immortal gods"; Phineus, the sage counsellor of the Argonauts, who had received his prophetic powers from Apollo, blinded by the gods for having communicated to mortals the divine counsels of Zeus about the future; and, most prominent of all, Tiresias, from whom Odysseus sought counsel in the underworld, and who had the power there among the shades to put strict injunctions on the hero when he left that place, the disobeying of which brought a promised penalty, like neglect of the directions given a mortal in faery when he sought his old home.

As to Tiresias, the cause of his blindness was believed to have been the fact that he had revealed to men things which, according to the will of the gods, they ought not to know, or that he had seen Athena while she was bathing, on which occasion the goddess is said to have blinded him by sprinkling water into his face, or because he aroused the indignation of Hera, when he decided against her in a dispute with Zeus. Tiresias acts so prominent a part in the mythical history of Greece that there is scarcely any event with which he is not connected in some way or other, and this introduction of the seer in so many occurrences separated by long intervals of time, was facilitated by the belief in his long life. Faery was the home of prophecy as well as of poesy, and the sufferings of blind seers as well as of blind bards were supposed to spring from the same supernatural cause.*

In the Bible we have literal belief in blindness as able to be either produced or healed by the Deity or his instruments. Elisha smote the Syrians with blindness, even as angels of the Lord at the house of Lot brought the same affliction on the men of Sodom, " so that they wearied themselves to find the door." Saul was stricken with blindness on the way to Damascus, but after a supernatural vision his sight was restored to him by Ananias and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Filled with the Holy

Spirit, he himself imposed blindness on the false prophet Bar-jesus, Elymas the sorcerer, " and immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand." *

Still more significant is the attitude of Christ Himself to blindness, which the Jews plainly thought might be a penalty of sin. " There was brought unto Him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb, and He healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw." " In that same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues and of evil spirits, and unto many that were blind He gave sight." The method Jesus used to heal the man of Bethsaida was to spit in his eyes and put His hands upon him. In the case of the blind beggar at the pool of Siloam, " He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay." To heal other blind men, however, He merely " touched their eyes," while the cure of Bartimaeus was made to depend solely on his faith.†

That the Jews looked upon congenital blindness as an affliction by the Deity is clear from the question that the disciples asked about the man at the pool: " Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind ? " And Jesus's

answer — "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" * — was a definite claim to His divinity. Only a god could give or take away sight. Notable are the words that Moses spake when Jehovah appeared to him in the burning bush: "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt say." † The Hebrew God, like a Celtic deity could deprive of sight and give eloquence of speech.

Homer, says Plato, "never had the wit to discover why he was blind." It was just as well. Homer was evidently blind for some divine reason. But what? Was it his own sin or the sin of his parents? Let every man guess according to parallel. Plato showed what he was thinking about when he brought the supreme bard into connection with Stesichorus, whose losing of his eyesight, as the philosopher explained, was the penalty which was inflicted upon him for reviling the lovely Helen.‡ Though special reasons are thus given in individual cases for blindness of poets, they all

seem but variants of the same sort of superstition, and this is true of the earliest as of the latest times. The mythical Homer was afflicted, as it were, for the sins of his mythical fathers; even so his rhapsodic descendants, when need was felt, to the tenth generation. But this affliction was beneficial to their renown, since it implied supernatural association.

Blindness is still, not only an open sesame to sympathy, but a stimulus to awe. Wordsworth touches the point nearly when, in the *Prelude*,* he explains his feelings on suddenly seeing a blind beggar in a London street.

> On the shape of that unmoving man,
> His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed,
> As if admonished from another world.

Admonition! He was in "the felt presence of the Deity."

There is no need to repeat here all the "mythological errors" connected with Homer's blindness,† but one deserves attention. An anonymous writer, in one of the *Lives*, says that, Homer requesting the gods to grant him a sight of Achilles, that hero rose, but in armor so bright that it struck Homer blind with the blaze.‡ Such conceptions also find a parallel in primitive Celtic story. Blindness, it was said, resulted from looking at the Fál's wheel,§ and the same penalty attached to over-inquisitiveness

in prying out the gods' mysteries. In a *Dinnsenchas* we are told how the well of inspiration in faery might not be approached save by certain beings and in certain stated ways: " Boánd wife of Nechtan son of Labraid went to the Secret Well which was in the green of sid Nechtan. Whoever went to it would not come from it without his two eyes bursting, unless it was Nechtan himself and his three cupbearers." * A similar idea is present in the puzzling Old Norse story of Odin's pledging his eye to Sokkmimir, the giant of the abyss, for a draught of the deep well of wisdom. Under the Ash of Yggdrasill, as Snorri informs us in the *Gylfaginning*,† is " Mimir's Well, wherein wisdom and understanding are stored; and he is called Mimir who keeps the well. He is full of ancient lore, since he drinks of the well from the Gjallar-Horn. Thither came Allfather and craved one drink of the well — but he got it not until he had laid his eye in pledge. So says *Völuspa:*

All know I, Odin — where the eye thou hiddest,
In the wide-renowned — well of Mimir;
Mimir drinks mead — every morning
From Valfather's pledge. — Wit ye yet, or what ? "

Odin escaped from the underworld one-eyed, but " full of ancient lore," a famous *þulr*,‡ or bard. In the form of a one-eyed, long-bearded old sage, he tells King Olaf of days long gone by.

Confused with such ideas of blindness as a penalty on mortals, was no doubt that of blindness as a disguise for immortals who chose to appear on earth to effect their wills. Merlin, as we have seen, and other supernatural folk in Celtic fable, assumed the likeness of blind bards when they desired. Odin was wont to go about under the name Blindr, the Blind One, a god in disguise. He thus was represented in both aspects, blind because of his own divine power as a shape-shifter, and blind because he sought divine power and had to pay the price of his ambition.

Ephorus thought the name Homer simply meant the Blind One, and it may be that the mythical personage of that name who was made the great mouthpiece of ancient Greek lore, was conceived of as actually a god. But it is not necessary to go so far. Granted the belief in deities as the source of occult knowledge, if men tried to picture a bard of superior authority, they could hardly fail to imagine his association with otherworld powers. If any ancient bard (fabled or real) had uncommon skill or wisdom, he might naturally in primitive times be supposed to have derived these from the gods, and he would almost inevitably draw like a magnet, in some form or other, the conception of blindness attaching to mortals with divine gifts, just as national leaders of fame, whether it be the

mythical Odin and Arthur, or the historical James IV of Scotland and Napoleon, have had attached to them the conception of immortality, and aroused the same hope of return to their native land to free it from a foreign yoke. To us such notions may seem mere skimble-skamble stuff, but that is only because we do not know their origin, or recognize that primitive ideas still hold sway with primitive-minded men. It must not be forgotten that the reason why Joan of Arc moved the soldiers of France was because they believed in her intercourse with and guidance by spirits.

Critics nowadays act like the euhemerizers of the sixth and seventh centuries of our era (a happy time for their sort) when they try to make out that ancient bards were blind, or that ancient smiths were lame,* because these professions were possible for them, and the state thus got service from persons who were otherwise useless. No one denies that in historical times blind men for good reason have often chosen to sing, just as they have often chosen to beg, or that cripples have often chosen occupations where they could sit down, just as they too have often chosen to beg. But the lame, halt and blind among the gods cannot be treated from such a utilitarian standpoint. Hephæstus, teacher of the arts, was lame and halt, even as Odin, god of poetry, was blind, for a mythological

reason. In America, one may frequently see dwarfish hunchbacks employed to run elevators. Very good. Very natural. But that does not force us to believe that the dwarfs and hunchbacks of old fiction were actually human beings, only infirm. As a matter of fact, the dwarfs and hunchbacks of Celtic and Germanic story were all, for aught we know, supernatural in origin.

Common sense should show us that as the soul is as real as the body, so myth is as real as fact, that each can be combined with the other, and that the nature of the foundation in any particular instance can not be determined except by unprejudieed inquiry. Plainly, the process did not always go one way.* That deities were humanized is as certain as that humans were deified. If we have far more clear cases of the latter than the former, it is because records of humans are far more numerous than imaginings of gods. But the continual process of deifying men shows the eternal presence of a love of poetic feigning in all ordinary mortals which witnesses to the mood of the first creation of gods and devils. Fact must be transfigured to give it permanent appeal to the masses because of their ever latent consciousness of supernatural beings who can manifest themselves on earth. Gods are still made in men's image, as well as men in the image of gods.†

For a long time the blind bard has been as fanciful a conception as the noble savage, or the inspired idiot; but it was not so formerly. If most blind bards in primitive story were credited with connections with the supernatural world, it was because, as we shall see later, that was believed to be the chief seat of inspiration, and if they were declared, for some offence against a deity, to have lost their first sight, they might be believed to have gained second sight, by virtue of which, all would admit, they had the godlike power to guide men, and might be used at any time as vehicles of any sort of wisdom.

It is safe to assert that no learned man has ever heard of an actual blind poet without thinking of the mythical blind poets and prophets celebrated in antiquity. Milton was not singular when he consoled himself in his own affliction by recalling

> Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides,
> And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old —

and longed for mysterious inner sight, like that which, Homer says, the Muse gave Demodocus.

> So much the rather thou celestial Light
> Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
> Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence
> Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight.*

It is not surprising that Milton was hailed in England as "old Homer's youngest son," "great Homer of our isle," "Britannia's Homer." * Later writers accepted his comparison of his plight with that of the ancient Greeks, and willingly played upon his allegorical interpretation of the old myths with which they were gladly familiar. Thus for example, Andrew Marvell (1620–1678):

> Just Heaven thee, like Tiresias, to requite
> Rewards with prophecy thy loss of sight.

John Hughes (1677–1720):

> The Muse with transport lov'd him; yet, to fill
> His various lot, she blended good with ill;
> Deprived him of his eyes, but did impart
> The heavenly gift of song, and all the tuneful art.

Thomas Gray, in his *Progress of Poesy*, pictures Milton as afflicted for his presumption, because, like Homer, who longed for a view of the great Achilles, or here more definitely, because like Ezekiel, he wished to see the glory of the appearance of the Lord,

> He that rode sublime
> Upon the seraph-wings of Ecstasy,
> The secrets of th' abyss to spy,
> He pass'd the flaming bounds of place and time:
> The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
> Where angels tremble while they gaze,
> He saw, but *blasted with excess of light*
> Clos'd his eyes in endless night.

This comes nearer the mythological truth than the explanation of Stephen Phillips in his striking poem *To Milton — Blind:*

> He who said suddenly, "Let there be light!"
> To thee the dark deliberately gave;
> That those full eyes might undistracted be
> By this beguiling show of sky and field,
> This brilliance, that so lures us from the Truth.
> He gave thee back original night, His own
> Tremendous canvas, large and blank and free,
> Where at each thought a star flashed out and sang.
> O blinded with a special lightning, thou
> Hadst once again the virgin Dark!

All of which is mere fruit of modern fancy, though it adopt the old idea of "a special lightning." More antique is the alternative explanation the same poet suggests:

> Or rather a special leave to thee was given
> By the high power, and thou with bandaged eyes
> Wast guided through the glimmering camp of God.
> Thy hand was taken by angels who patrol
> The evening, or are sentries to the dawn,
> Or pace the wide air everlastingly.
> Thou wast admitted to the presence, and deep
> Argument heardest, and the large design
> That brings this world out of the woe to bliss.*

Goethe represents Faust as punished by blindness for his selfish desire to have a station on the linden-trees whence to overlook his lands, and the crime to which it led, but makes him gain at the

same time. When the "grisly old Sisters" appear to him, Care remarks:

> Perfect in external senses,
> Inwardly his darkness dense is.

After she breathes in his eyes and blinds him, Faust exclaims:

> The night seems deeper now to press around me,
> But in my inmost spirit all is light.*

Philosophizing on blindness was inevitable. Even in antiquity Homer's blindness was explained allegorically, according to Suidas, as "blindness to desires that press upon one through the eyes." † And it is well known how the mystics believed that by shutting their eyes they might see the more inwardly.‡ In 1694 Gildon suggested that Milton needed for *Paradise Lost* that inner illumination which came in consequence of his blindness, § and such views prevailed during the eighteenth century, as, indeed, perhaps to-day. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in a sonnet to his "light-reft" friend Philip Bourke Marston, hints at that unfortunate writer's having more piercing inner sight than the "light-blest." There was much to justify the idea. All blind persons have undoubtedly had compensations for their blindness, and Milton's scenes sometimes show a sweep and grandeur that may actually be the result of his

aloof, uncorrected, mental images. Bird-fanciers have been known to prick the eyes of the chaffinch to make him warble better, and the blindness of lyric poets like Marston no doubt makes them the more prone to turn within themselves fruitfully to explore their own souls. But such is not the way to produce epic poets, who need large contact with the world and man to penetrate deeply the elements of life.

To go farther with the inquiry into the real or possible influence of blindness (whole or partial) upon an author would be out of place here, and might smack too much of old entertaining but futile discussions like Blackwell's on Homer, where poverty, the lack of learning and the need of wandering, are claimed to have been contributory to his original genius, and in general advantageous in the development of a great bard. Most scholars believe that neither the *Iliad* nor the *Wallace* could possibly have been written by one physically blind, but some critics of recent times have held the opposite. Taste without knowledge confuses wisdom among literary historians.

"Homer never existed, of course," says John Masefield,* "but the old idea of the poet's being blind is very significant." Undoubtedly! And in more ways, as I have tried to show, than critics of blind poets have hitherto supposed. I content my-

self now with emphasizing what I believe to be also significant, the fact, namely, that much of the material for the philosophic ruminations of modern men on blindness has been derived from the consideration of ancient fabulous personages whose blindness was mythical. But a myth is only a poetic conception. Even as "the sight of lovers feedeth those in love," poetry feedeth poets, philosophy philosophers. Both poets and philosophers are wont to sit and dream "in chambers haunted by old memories."

CHAPTER XII

The Progress of Conceptions of Poesy

> Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father, and he will show thee: thy elders and they will tell thee.
>
> *Book of Deuteronomy*

"LITTLE by little," says Tylor,* "in what seemed the most spontaneous fiction, a more comprehensive study of the sources of poetry and romance begins to disclose a cause for each fancy, an education that has led up to each train of thought, a store of inherited materials from out of which each province of the poet's land has been shaped, and built over and peopled."

The truth of this statement is most evident to the student of comparative literature who has tried to get at the peculiar personality and peculiar contribution of authors by inquiry into their ethnic and literary heritage as well as their personal aspirations. For such a student has at least discovered that all great poets have their roots down deep in the past, and that one can scarcely com-

prehend why Homer, Dante, Shakespeare or Milton so strongly influenced posterity until one recognizes how much they themselves were fashioned by previous influences. Myths occupy a large and precious part of the inherited materials that modern poets have seen fit to cherish, even as in myth both their physical and spiritual forbears, with divers degrees of insight, took delight and found instruction. And this because myths, in formation and transformation, have always been important vehicles of speculative and enlivening imagination.

Early myths were the poetic inventions of primitive men, intellectually curious but credulous, eager to question the whys and wherefores of things but satisfied to explain by story what they could not make clear by science. When such men speculated about mysterious phenomena and found no solution according to any laws of their experience, they set to work in childlike fashion to imagine what might be, and framed narratives of fanciful possibility as substitutes for statements of true knowledge. These narratives, if interesting, were handed down through the ages, by themselves and for themselves, with slight understanding as time went by of their first reason for being, ever subject to changes due to fresh poetic or dull prosaic interpretation. Some myths are now hope-

lessly obscure, but others reveal clearly to the student the subjects of wonder that led to their creation, and the mental habits of those who gave them shape.

One of the bewildering phenomena at which men in early ages persistently wondered was the state of inspiration, and the nature of this they tried to divine. Seeing certain of their fellows specially gifted as mages and musicians, poets and prophets, they meditated on their condition. How came it, they asked, that persons of human flesh and blood could do things beyond the scope of the general? Why were some abnormally gifted, some peculiarly endowed, some at times strangely aroused? "Whence hath this man this wisdom?" Whence in particular the "genius" of an exalted author, the animation of enthralling speech? What is the source of poesy?

Such questions have never ceased to absorb philosophic inquirers, yet little advance has been made in the answers offered. Scholars have taught us much about the actual beginnings of verse composition, but when we seek knowledge of its essence rather than its forms, of its moving power rather than the medium employed, we are confined to fancies, mere fancies, similar to those of our forefathers in antiquity. Only, in primitive times men started with different conceptions of the

origin and plan of the universe, which determined the explanation of the problems they tried to solve and the method of presentation they chose.

Whether, as has been asserted, "the mental condition of the lower races is the key to poesy" itself, it is certainly the key to the initial conceptions of it as "heaven-bred." Primitive men held an animative view of the universe. They believed the world peopled with spirits, and themselves surrounded by souls. They attributed all mysteries to divine agency. Poesy, they felt sure, was in the first instance due to deities. And these views they originally embodied, by natural habit, in the shapes of myth. The early myths of poetic inspiration were the work of poets trying to show forth in the guise of story the true significance of things, the ways of gods to men.

In *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* Shakespeare states the case of the poet myth-maker with perception unsurpassed:

> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> Such tricks hath strong imagination,
> That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
> It comprehends some bringer of that joy.*

Every word in this passage should be pondered. Whatever view Shakespeare himself held as to the nature of poetic genius (a matter for separate study), he here makes Theseus of Athens present with wonderful skill the ancient conception of the divinely-inspired bard. On the basis of the idea of " fine frenzy " we have already touched, and to it we shall presently return. Here, first, let us not fail to grasp the significance of what Shakespeare makes the result of that frenzy, the product of the poet's pen when his imagination seeks to body forth the forms of things unknown: he turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing, mere brain fantasies, inconstant dream images, a local habitation and a name. Myths offer us shapes and habitations and names that are simply due to the effort of poets to materialize ideas, the better to get them grasped. If a poet apprehends some joy, with strong imagination he comprehends some bringer of that joy.

The Celts, as well as the Greeks, apprehended the otherworld as the land *par excellence* of music and minstrelsy, of sapience and wisdom, of long memory and far sight. Were some men peculiarly able to give delight to others by superior skill in the arts, empowered to instruct them in past lore or guide their doubting steps, they imagined that these men owed their exceptional success to the

possession of divine properties, or attributes, and made up tales of how they were gained. Only two ways seemed natural — by gift or "lift," by luck or theft. So two forms of story arose, the one explaining how mortals enjoyed the favor of the gods, who came to visit them or took them to dwell with them, and endowed them with their own virtues, the other explaining how mortals, outwitting the gods, ravished from them their magic possessions.

The latter, which we shall first consider, appears to be the more original, for it usually concerns creatures of a lower order than the great created gods, yet themselves masters of illusion and phantasy. Though once perhaps demi-gods or *daimones*, in the end they were envisaged as heroes, who after great trial and tribulation became the benefactors of men, securing from grudging primal powers the instruments of culture and the arts.

Thus mysterious in nature were Amergin and Taliessin, two of the most celebrated Celtic bards and prophets, varying forms, it is conjectured, of one mythic original.*

In the poem, already examined, in which Taliessin describes his career, he explains: "I have obtained the muse from the cauldron of Ceridwen," and the tale of *Taliesin*, in which the poem is enshrined, begins by telling how that old hag under-

took, in the interests of an ill-favored son, to boil a cauldron, " which from the beginning of its boiling might not cease to boil for a year and a day, until three blessed drops were obtained of the grace of inspiration." So she set Gwion Bach to stir the cauldron. " And one day, towards the end of the year, as Ceridwen was culling plants and making incantations, it chanced that three drops of the charmed liquor flew out of the cauldron and fell upon the finger of Gwion Bach. And by reason of their great heat he put his finger into his mouth, and the instant he put those marvel-working drops into his mouth he foresaw everything that was to come, and perceived that his chief care must be to guard against the wiles of Ceridwen, for vast was her skill. And in very great fear he fled towards his own land."

The witch pursued Gwion, who assumed all manner of shapes, even as she did after him, until at last he turned into a grain of wheat, and she as a high-crested black hen swallowed him, bore him nine months, and then, when delivered, found him so beautiful that she could not bear to kill him. Therefore she wrapped him in a leathern bag and cast him into the sea. He was fished out, a tiny fellow, by a hapless youth called Elphin, and became a most famous bard and prophet. He was all-wise, knew the past and future, and spoke be-

fore the king "with a sapient Druid's words." He shows his supernatural wisdom in various ways, much like Merlin before Uter Pendragon. "He further told the king various prophecies of things that should be in the world." *

As to Taliessin's visits to the otherworld, Rhŷs writes: "He not only professes to have been in Caer Sidi and the Glass Fortress, he not only boasts having taken part in the harrying of Hades; but it is a familiar country to him, and he has witnessed how its inhabitants, whom neither plague nor death can reach, quaff a drink sweeter than wine from a copious fountain with which that submarine isle is blest. He knows every dwarf beneath the ocean, and has observed the rank assigned to each. This is not all: so truly is he a bard, that he is recognized as such even in the mythic mother-country of all bardism and knowledge; and that recognition takes the form of a bardic or professorial chair, reserved for him in Caer Sidi, and for his successors in his profession for ever." †

Taliessin avers that before him another still greater than he entered the otherworld (variously called Caer Sidi or Annwyn) and as a result became a primary bard.

> Stout was the prison of Gweir, in Caer Sidi.
> Through the spite of Pwyll and Pryderi:
> No one before him went into it.

The heavy blue chain firmly held the youth,
And before the spoils of Annwyn woefully he sang,
And thenceforth till doom he shall remain a bard.*

This Gweir, ravisher of the otherworld cauldron of inspiration, Rhŷs identifies with the great Gwydion, "the best story-teller in the world," of whom we read in the mabinogi of *Math*, a personage who, that learned scholar showed,† bears numerous resemblances to the Old Norse Odin (Woden).

Odin, it will be remembered, was "the father of magic" (*galdrs fǫður, aldinn gautr*), able by *valgaldr* to conjure up the Sibyl from the depths. One reason stated for his being "the wisest of men" was because the dwarf Mimir gave him all good counsel; Odin had pawned his eye at the well beneath the tree Yggdrasill to secure the potion of wisdom. He and the seeress Saga are said to have drunk joyously out of golden cups at her abode of Sunk-bench, over which the cold waves ever murmur.‡

But Odin was reputed a poet, a god of poetry, and the explanation of his supernatural power in that direction is given by Snorri in the section of the prose *Edda* called *Skaldskaparmál*, where various kennings for poesy are explained. The matter is obviously distorted, but the essential idea that poetic inspiration derives from a drink stolen from otherworld powers comes out clearly.

Snorri represents the sea-god Ægir, "deeply versed in black magic," as inquiring of Bragi, "the first maker of poetry," the beginnings of his art, whereupon Bragi answers: *

"These were the beginnings thereof: the gods had a dispute with the folk which are called Vanir, and they appointed a peace-meeting between them and established peace in this way: they each went to a vat and spat their spittle therein. Then at parting the gods took that peace-token and would not let it perish, but shaped thereof a man. This man is called Kvasir, and he was so wise that none could question him concerning anything but that he knew the solution. He went up and down the earth to give instruction to men; and when he came upon invitation to the abode of certain dwarfs, Fjallar and Galarr, they called him into privy converse with them, and killed him, letting his blood run into two vats and a kettle. The kettle is named Odrerir, and the vats Són and Bódn; they blended honey with the blood, and the *outcome was that mead by the virtue of which he who drinks becomes a skald* [*poet*] *or scholar.*"

Bragi goes on, with much circumstantial detail, to explain how the mead afterwards came into the possession of a giant Suttungr, who concealed it in a place called Hnitbjörg, leaving his daughter Gunnlöd to watch over it.

"Because of this we call poesy Kvasir's Blood, or Dwarfs' Drink, or Fill, or any kind of liquid of Ódrerir, or of Bódn, or of Són, . . . or Suttungr's Mead, or Liquor of Hnitbjörg."

"Then Ægir said: 'These seem to me dark sayings, to call poesy by these names. But how did ye Æsir come at Suttungr's Mead?' Bragi answered: 'That tale runs thus.'" And he proceeds to relate how Odin, under the name Bölverkr, by virtue of his power of changing his shape, reached Gunnlöd's dwelling and craftily obtained leave from her to drink three draughts of the mead. "In the first draught he drank every drop out of Ódrerir; and in the second he emptied Bódn; and in the third, Són; and then he had all the mead. Then he turned himself into the shape of an eagle and flew as furiously as he could; but when Suttungr saw the eagle's flight, he too assumed the fashion of an eagle and flew after him.* When the Æsir saw Odin flying, straightway they set out their vats in the court; and when Odin came into Ásgard, he spat up the mead into the vats. Nevertheless he came so near to being caught by Suttungr that he sent some mead backwards, and no heed was taken of this: whosoever would might have that, and we call that the poetaster's part.† But Odin gave the mead of Suttungr to the Æsir and to those men who possess the ability to compose. Therefore we call

poesy Odin's Booty and Find, and his Drink and Gift, and the Drink of the Æsir."

This story savors strongly of Celtic fancy, and indeed may be directly derived from some lost fables of the West. The differentiation between the kettle and the two vats looks like a way of explaining three kennings instead of one, not only the liquid of Ódrerir (which means simply Inspiration), but also of Són and Bódn. To the Norse they were truly "dark sayings, to call poesy by these names"; but the Irish had stories connecting Bóand and Séon with poetry (which fact I venture to suggest was the cause of the kennings), and like myths embodying their view that the otherworld was the source of all wisdom. As related above, Bóand, wife of Nechtan and mother of Oengus, son of the Dagda, visited the secret well of faery, where grew the hazels of inspiration, and suffered a severe penalty for her ambition; * and in Irish the patron of artists was Séon the Philosopher, who is said to have known the nature of the planets. In an old Welsh poem "the artists of Se Séon the Stately" are represented as seekers of ale.†

In a *Dinnsenchas* ‡ we have another story of a similar quest: "Sinend, daughter of Lodan Lucharglan son of Ler, out of the Land of Promise, went to Connla's Well which is under sea to behold it. That is a well at which are *the hazels of wisdom and*

inspirations, that is the hazels of the science of poetry, and in the same hour their fruit, and their blossom and their foliage break forth, and then fall upon the well in the same shower, which raises upon the water a royal surge of purple. . . . Now Sinend went to seek the inspiration, for she wanted nothing save only wisdom . . . but the well left its place . . . and overwhelmed her . . . and when she had come to the land on this side (of the Shannon) she tasted death." "In this remarkable legend," Nutt remarks,* "we have, if I mistake not, the most archaic Irish version, and one perhaps as archaic as found in the records of any Aryan people, of how the god world becomes man's world, or, to express it in the terms of the Hebrew myth, how evil and knowledge and death came into the world."

Cuchulinn, moreover, was reputed to have made an expedition to Scath (Shade), where he won the king's cauldron,† and there are other cases where magic vessels are sought for in the nether region. The so-called cauldron of the Head of Hades had a ridge of pearls round its brim. It was kept boiling by the breath of nine maidens, and from it voices issued.‡

Rhŷs brings the Oriental god Indra into connection with Gwydion and Odin as bringers to mortals of poetic stimulus. "With regard to wisdom and

poetry he is the most sagacious of the wise, and the most skilled in song; he is called an old friend of the poets, and is not unfrequently associated with an ancient race of singers known by the name of Angiras; he has assumed the inspiration of prophets, and he can take all forms through his magic power." * In the Rig-Veda we read of Indra in eagle-form: "being well-winged, he carried to men the food tasted by the gods." † Indra makes rishis, wise men or poets, of those who have imbibed soma, a drink parallel in Sanskrit to nectar and ambrosia in Greek myth. It is said to untie the poet's tongue.

Celtic stories also exist where mortal visitors to the otherworld gain, not by force or fraud, but by fortune or favor, some precious possession which affects their nature, making it partake of the divine. One of the most interesting of these is the *imram* of Teigue, son of Cian,‡ who penetrated to Elysium, where he and his companions needed no nourishment and where a twelvemonth passed like a day. There a damsel, as wise as lovely, acquainted Teigue with the manner of his death, and his future, and then gave him a precious cup of emerald hue in which his life was bound up. This cup had wonderful attributes, one, reminding us of a Biblical miracle, that water poured into it would immediately become wine.

It was here in a *dún* with a silver rampart that Teigue found Connla, and in his hand he held a fragrant apple having the hue of gold; a third part of it he would eat, and still, for all he consumed, never a whit would it be diminished. Beside him was a lady of wondrous charm who had bestowed on him, she declared, "true affection's love," and therefore wrought to have him come to her in that land. And the apple "it was that supported the pair of them and, when once they had partaken of it, nor age nor dimness could affect them." She showed Teigue the marvellous apple tree in the *dún* on which grew this virtuous fruit, and was told that a single apple had lured Connla to her. We can but think of Bragi, the Old Norse god of poetry, and how he had a wife Idun, who possessed the golden apples of immortality.

Cormac, high-king of Ireland, grandson of Conn, also visited the Land of Promise, guided by a grey old messenger, who brought him a silver branch with three golden apples on it. "Delight and amusement enough it was to listen to the music made by that branch, for men sore wounded, or women in childbed, or folk in sickness, would fall asleep at the melody when that branch was shaken" — a fair symbol of the otherworld gift of music. When Cormac reaches alone the great plain of the land of immortality, "then he sees in the

garth a shining fountain with five streams flowing out of it, and the hosts in turn a-drinking its water. Nine hazels of Buan grow over the well. The purple hazels drop their nuts into the fountain, and the five salmon which are in the fountain sever them, and send their husks floating down the streams. Now the sound of the falling of those streams is more melodious than any music that [men] sing." Cormac learns that the messenger who took him to the otherworld (as also previously his wife and children), and who sang him to sleep, was the great god of the Tuatha De Danann, Manannan Mac Lir, who, before he transported Cormac back to Tara, gave him not only the Silver Branch of song, but also a magic cup of truth. " Take the cup," he says to Cormac, " that thou mayest have it for discerning between truth and falsehood. And thou shalt have the Branch for music and delight. And on the day that thou shalt die they all will be taken from thee. I am Manannan, son of Ler, king of the Land of Promise; and to see the Land of Promise was the reason I brought [thee] hither. . . . The fountain which thou sawest, with the five streams out of it, is the Fountain of Knowledge, and the streams are the five senses through which knowledge is obtained (?). And no one will have knowledge who drinketh not a draught out of the fountain itself and out of the streams. The

folk of many arts are those who drink of them both." *

Such a tale as that of Manannan's Well, the Fountain of Knowledge, is undoubtedly connected with the general pagan cult of sacred waters, and reminds us of the situation in Greece,

> Where each old poetic mountain
> Inspiration breath'd around,
> Ev'ry shade and hallow'd fountain
> Murmur'd deep a solemn sound.

Gray, it may be said, broad-visioned as he was, and better informed about Celtic and Scandinavian myth than most English writers, nevertheless turned his eyes most lovingly to classical antiquity when, emulating Pindar, he began his ode on *The Progress of Poesy:*

> Awake, Aeolian lyre! awake,
> And give to rapture all thy trembling strings.
> From Helicon's harmonious springs
> A thousand rills their mazy progress take.

In general, so little has been known of British traditions that but few rills have progressed into England's poet-land from the harmonious springs of faery, though these have been shown to be powerful, for the same divine reason as the gleaming fancies of the Greeks, to evoke true rapture in the true bard.

> Apollo, Pallas, Jove, or Mercury
> Inspire me!

Modern English poets in infinite number, even Anglo-Celtic poets, have instinctively appealed for inspiration, like the noble Marcus, to Roman gods.

But not so very long ago British bards turned to the underworld of their own imagining as the source of poetic inspiration, and the dark deity of that domain — be he called Bran, Urien, Pwyll, March, Math, or Arawn — was adored as a patron by Celtic minstrels and musicians. Certain gods in particular were called upon by bards for the favor of fortunate song. Ogyrven, owner of the cauldron, was deemed by them to have been the originator of their art. Ceridwen they long invoked in their artistic undertakings. Ogma Cermait (' the Honey-mouthed '), credited with the invention of the famous script ogam, was counted a god of eloquence. Cairpre, his son, was reputed the first, and a magical, satirist. In Ireland Brigit, daughter of the Dagda, was honored as a goddess of poetry before her name became otherwise celebrated, as borne by a saint. Gwydion was exalted as the one who introduced into Wales the knowledge of letters. Like their classical counterparts, all these beings were at first feigned, but ultimately came, it would seem, to have so much reality to the pagan-minded that native Christian ecclesiastics strove to sink them without trace in an ocean of rebuke. Paganism still infected Celtic bards throughout

the Middle Ages. In the fourteenth century the poet-priest Sion Kent attacked some as "Men of Hu," whose muse was the genius of lying, while on the other hand the Book of Taliessin resounds with scorn of the Christian school.*

King James V of Scotland, in his tract on *Dæmonologie*,† dealing with "the fourth kind of spirits called the Phairie," points out how people even in his day claimed to have been transported through a hill to the otherworld, where they saw a faery queen and received from her a stone of virtuous power. After enumerating some of "the many vain trattles founded upon that illusion," he sagely concludes: "I think it liker Virgil's *Campi Elysii* nor anything that ought to be believed by Christians." Happily, being now untroubled by belief or unbelief in pagan conceptions, we are glad to recognize that faery resembled the Elysian Fields, and we accompany old Celtic heroes thither with the same zest with which we follow Æneas and his companions, guided by the Cumæan Sibyl, to the "paradise of pleasances" that Virgil has made renowned.

The Celtic tales of faery are, in truth, tales of an Elysium, for faery they present as "the land of the living heart," a land of healing and comfort, a land of noble sweet-sounding music, "that swells with choruses of hundreds — they look for neither

decay nor death." There the blest inhabitants abridge the lazy time with delights of entertainment undreamt of on earth, while noble men of lore, untrammeled by fault of memory, gladly unlock their word-hoards, and tell in perfect wise of

> Fierce war and faithful love,
> And Truth severe by fairy fiction drest.

Favored mortals taken thither feel the enchantment of supernal music, and the spell of wondrous story, all in being shown mysteries beyond human understanding.

Still, there is always a reverse side to the picture of such men, which we must have in mind if we would understand the mythical conception of "fine frenzy." If, after having actually visited faery, the elect of the deities were required to return to our world, they were always seen to retain a mark of their otherworld existence. Having literally learned by supernatural experience the rapture of supreme love, the ecstasy of far sight, the transport of superior knowledge, they were plainly set apart from the rest of mankind. Sad with unsatisfied longing, overwhelmed with grief because shut out from the land of heart's desire, they could not but seem solitary figures, in their own as in others' eyes. Their earthly companions may have pitied them, not fully comprehending the cause of their despair, but they inevitably esteemed them as links with

the divine. By powers from above or below, it was believed, their memories had been stored with rich knowledge of the past, their faculties equipped with rich possessions of art and science for use in the present, their eyes opened to rich visions of the far future. In benefit of these memories, in service of these faculties, in the strength of second sight, such mortals so spake that they were accepted as guides by the people among whom they dwelt, even when, in eloquence or raving, they proclaimed what ordinary men did not grasp. "Tongue," Thomas the Rhymer explained, "is chief of minstrelsy." In faery the privileged gained "the gift of tongues" on which St. Paul dwelt, with all the responsibility their inspiration implied, all the sadness, even madness, their election entailed.

If perchance the visitants from the otherworld were only transients, called up unwillingly from the undiscovered country to give evidence of old faith, or reborn * with more than intimations of immortality, they seemed still more unique among men, unique in appearance as well as in endowment, "robed in the sable garb of woe" because disquieted in their abode, or rendered grave by the sense of sacred mysteries, yet gloried in as prophets and priests of the Most High!

Plato asserts, on the authority of "certain wise men and women who spoke of things divine," that

" in the ninth year Persephone sends the souls of those from whom she has received the penalty of ancient crime back again into the light of this world, and these are they who become noble kings and mighty men and surpassing in poetical skill, and are called saintly heroes in after ages." *

Boccaccio, in his *Life of Dante*, after describing the poet's personal appearance and his melancholy, thoughtful expression, goes on: " Hence it chanced one day in Verona (where the fame of his works had spread abroad everywhere, and especially that part of his Comedy which he entitles Hell; and when he himself was known by sight to many, both men and women), that as he passed by a gateway where sat a group of women, one of them said to the others, softly, yet so that she was heard well enough by him and his company: ' Do you see the man who goes to Hell, and comes again, at his pleasure; and brings tidings up here of them that be below ? ' To the which one of the others answered *in all good faith:* ' In truth it must needs be as thou sayest. See'st thou not how his beard is crisped and his skin darkened by the heat and smoke that are there below ? ' And hearing these words spoken behind him and *perceiving that they sprang from the perfect belief of the women*, he was pleased, and as though content that they should be of such opinion, he passed on, smiling a little."

The most interesting feature of this passage is Dante's perception that the Veronese women spoke in all good faith and that their idea about his frequenting of Hell, and his power to bring up tidings thence to mortals, sprang from their perfect belief that such things could be. Whether from stories of previous happenings of the sort, or from primeval conceptions latent among them, they believed that poets and seers might frequent the underworld and get inspiration there, and they expected this to show itself in outer abnormality.

Some tales of otherworld journeys that resulted in inspiration undoubtedly originated in the common pagan practice of consulting the oracles of the dead, or in initiatory rites, and these were particularly developed to embody ethical instruction. Such narratives as those of Plutarch concerning Aridaeus-Thespesius and Timarchus, the mediaeval visions of the hereafter, *The Purgatory of St. Patrick* and *Owain Miles*, were all used for moral or religious purpose. They are tales, not of metamorphosis, like those we here first considered, but of metempsychosis, tales of inner change. The protagonists, mortal from first to last, became men of distinction through personal katharsis, or purgation. In some cases only the disembodied soul made the journey, but the result was the same: when the soul returned to the body, the man's nature was

altered and he had new powers as a guide, which his fellows acknowledged. As Maximus of Tyre said of Epimenides, who was reported to have fallen into a deep sleep while guarding his flock by the cave of the Dictaean Zeus, a magic sleep lasting fifty-seven years, during which he gained from the gods his extraordinary knowledge of religious matters: he had "a dream for his teacher." *

The effect of such experiences was supposed to be manifest, not only in the knowledge and capacity, but in the manner and mien of the men who had undergone them. In particular it was said of neophytes who descended into the cave of Trophonius, saw the awe-inspiring sights there, and heard marvellous revelations, which were afterwards interpreted, that they never smiled again, and a proverb arose that persons of dejected aspect had "consulted the oracle of Trophonius." †

Mystery likewise attended the experiences of "men in Christ" who had visions of Paradise.‡ Such visions were not only awe-inspiring to the seers, but when noised about led to their being treated with awe. They felt themselves and were felt to be "the chosen vessels of God."

It was not necessary, however, for mortals to journey in body or soul to the land of the deities to be inspired, for beings from the spirit-world, gods and angels, ancestors and daemons, it was

declared, oft appeared to men as a mark of grace. The Bible is replete with such apparitions. Gideon was threshing wheat by the winepress when an angel appeared unto him, saying "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor," and bade him save Israel. He had "found grace" in God's sight, and was shown a sign. The spirit of the Lord came also upon Jephthah, the Gileadite, and more than once "moved" Samson mightily. When "the Word of the Lord came unto Elijah," he was empowered even to bring a child's soul back to his body.*

Sometimes the appearance of an angel of the Lord to the elect brought on him a physical affliction, as when Zacharias was struck dumb, and Saul blind, thus to suffer until such time as Heaven granted them release. But more often they were merely overcome by emotion, which nevertheless indicated to all observers that they were in the power of the spirit.† Their "possession" was not in character different from that which animated evil persons, for devils too entered into men and could not be cast out save by superior authority. Not only Simeon, following the revelation of the Holy Spirit, but "a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil," witnessed to Jesus's being the Holy One of God. Not only angels from on high, but "devils also came out of many crying out, and

saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God." No one who saw Jesus's miracles questioned His inspiration. He wrought, as He claimed, "in the power of the Spirit"; yet Jews maintained that the spirit within Him was a devil. According to the New Testament, the life of the Christian was to be an inspired life; but he must be ever on his guard against evil possession. "Beloved," said John, "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." *

Long ago in mediaeval Britain, scholars anticipated the modern comparative method of studying religion as well as literature, and had their materials been more extensive they would have advanced far. Very suggestively Giraldus Cambrensis † speculated on the subject of soothsaying, and brought the Awennithion (Awenyddion) or "people inspired," the prophets of Wales, into connection with Greek as well as Hebrew prophets. In Merlin, of course, Giraldus was particularly interested, though he could hardly doubt that he spoke by a pythonic or diabolic spirit. "We read," he says, "the prophecies of Merlin, but hear nothing of his sanctity or his miracles." Merlin and Ambrosius, who "are said to have foretold the destruction of their nation as well as the coming of the Saxons, and afterwards that of

the Normans," he compared with Calchas and Cassandra, who foretold the destruction of Troy. His highly significant remark, "These prophets are only found among the Britons descended from the Trojans," though it presupposes belief in the fable of Brut exploited by Geoffrey of Monmouth, nevertheless indicates an acute perception of cognate ideas.

Boëthius was careful to distinguish between prescience and "absurd" vaticinations like those of Tiresias.* Dante put Amphiaraus and other diviners of antiquity, along with Michael Scot, in hell.† Certain of the Church Fathers proscribed pagan works because they might be vessels, as Augustine indicated, containing "the wine of error," or, as Jerome put it, "the food of demons"‡ — phrases reminiscent of materialistic myths. Bacon was impressed by these phrases but thought them severe and undiscriminating.§

The fourteenth-century English mystic Walter Hilton warned his countrymen that the devil could enter into a man and by false illuminations overtravail his imagination. "And then, for feebleness of the brain, him thinketh that he heareth wonderful sounds and songs; and that is *nothing else but a fantasy, caused of troubling of the brain; as a man that is in a frenzy,* him thinketh that he heareth and seeth that none other man doth; and

all is but vanity and fantasies of the head, or else it is by working of the wicked enemy that feigneth such sounds in his hearing." * Shakespeare makes Mercutio speak in similar phrase of dreams

> Which are the children of an idle brain
> Begot of nothing but vain fantasy.†

"What spirit, what devil suggests this imagination ?" asks Page in *Merry Wives*.‡

Tylor points out that we owe our terms demoniac, exorcist, epilepsy, nympholepsy (the state of being seized or possessed by a nymph) to the Greek for good reason. "The causation of mental derangement and delirious utterance by spiritual possession was an accepted tenet of Greek philosophy. To be insane was simply to have an evil spirit, as when Socrates said of those who denied demonic or spiritual knowledge, that they themselves were demoniac, . . . So the Romans called madmen 'larvati,' 'larvarum pleni,' full of ghosts. Patients possessed by demons stared and foamed, and the spirits spoke from within them by their voices. The craft of the exorcist was well known. As for oracular possession, its theory and practice remained in fullest vigour through the classic world, scarce altered from the times of lowest barbarism. Could a South Sea Islander have gone to Delphi to watch the convulsive struggles of the

Pythia, and listen to her raving, shrieking utterances, he would have needed no explanation whatever of a rite so absolutely in conformity with his own savage philosophy."

"The general doctrine of disease-spirits and oracle-spirits appears to have its earliest, broadest, and most consistent position within the limits of savagery." Among savage tribes "madmen are to be treated with great respect, as entered by a god, and idiots owe the kindness with which they are appeased and coaxed to the belief in their superhuman inspiration. Here, and elsewhere in the lower culture, the old real belief has survived which has passed into a jest of civilized men in the famous phrase of the 'inspired idiot.'" *

Our romantic notions of inspired idiots, like those of blind bards, it is important to recognize, are ultimately based on primitive beliefs, a fact which is no doubt primarily responsible for their enduring life. But that life has clearly been prolonged by great writers, who have ever lovingly renewed consideration of mythical beings made mad or blind by divine agency. We have already seen how Plato treated the blindness of Homer. He was still more interested in the question of fine frenzy, or, to use his own words, "divine release from the ordinary ways of men," and in the *Phaedrus* he indicates the gods who were supposed to preside over such

madness in its different manifestations; "prophetic" madness was the inspiration of Apollo, "initiatory" that of Dionysus, "poetic" that of the Muses, and "erotic" that of Aphrodite and Eros.

The Celts told of inspired madmen of each of these types, though, no more than actually among the Greeks, were they kept apart. The Irish *fáith*, a prophet or poet, is cognate to the Latin *vates*, and apparently akin to the Old Norse *óðr*, mind, soul, song, the English *wód*, mad, and the German *Wuth*, rage. The Celts believed that a man who underwent hardship on Cader Idris or Snowdon would be inspired as a bard; but he might become a madman, that is to say, the inspiration might prove different from that of the bard. The idiot of the family plays the part of a prophet in the Irish story concerning the formation of Lough Neagh.* Comgan, son of the King of the Decies in Munster, we read, was made mad by a druid's flinging a magic wisp over him and pronouncing a spell. "There he wasted away in body, his mind decayed, his hair fell off; and ever afterwards he wandered about the palace, a bald drivelling idiot. But he had lucid intervals, and then he became an inspired poet, and uttered prophecies; so that he is known in the legendary literature as *Mac-da-cerda*, the

'youth of the two arts,' that is to say, poetry and foolishness." *

Such stories may depend ultimately on actual manifestations of real or apparent frenzy connected with Druidic initiation rites and magic spells.† The Druids were esteemed as holy prophets, sacred interpreters of the gods' decrees, and delivered their messages in, or as if in, a trance. But the stories themselves perpetuated the idea of a connection between poetry and foolishness (lunacy) which was credited long after any such physical basis for it was conceivable, this idea being supported by the natural sense of mystery aroused to this day by the sight of any one abnormal.

The general belief of antiquity was expressed in Cicero's words "Nemo vir magnus sine aliquo adflatu divino umquam fuit." Aristotle inquired why "all who have excelled in philosophy, statesmanship, poetry, or the arts are of a melancholy temperament"; and Seneca misquoted him: "Nullum magnum ingenium sine mixtura dementiae fuit." Dryden echoed the idea:

> Great wits are sure to madness near allied
> And thin partitions do their bounds divide. ‡

We are here interested particularly in the inspiration of "great wits," but we must not overlook that of lovers, whose form of madness was formerly held to be but another sign of divine or daemonic

possession; and not, indeed, unnaturally, for the marks are much the same, and it is only when in love, as we say, with a subject, as with a person, that men, as we say, act like fools, scorning (earthly) delights and living laborious days, to attain the purely intangible joys of new knowledge or experience.

Among the daemons that inspire men, Plato put Eros,* and Shakespeare preludes Theseus' words already quoted by the following lines:

> I never may believe
> These antique fables, nor these Fairy toys.
> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping phantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,
> Are of imagination all compact.
> One sees more devils than vast hell can hold:
> That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.

There has always seemed something magical, something beyond human law, in the emotions of a lover, and this conception has always been fortified by old story. In Celtic as in Greek myth, otherworld persons, regularly presented as amorous, had peculiar power to excite love-madness. Passionate love was thought to be superinduced by mysterious agencies, as by a potion in the story of Tristram and Ysolt, but particularly through

music. The harping of the bard Glasgerion made ladies wax mad with desire. The harp of Angus mac Oc, the Gaelic Eros, produced such sweet music that no one could hear and not follow it. And it was the enchanting music of the fairies Liban and Fand, in the form of swans, which made the men of Erin fall into a deep sleep, while they overwhelmed the great Cuchulinn with love-frenzy, from which Conchobar's druid alone could cure him by giving him a drink of forgetfulness.* Cuchulinn's wife Emer had to seek these means to expel her husband's fairy-mistress, of whom she was jealous. Even so Guinevere in a fit of jealousy on account of Elayne, also originally a fairy, banished Lancelot, whereupon he went out of his mind and was not healed until Elayne nursed him in the Joyous Isle, where he was found after many years by Sir Hector and Sir Perceval, and persuaded to return to Arthur's court.† Such heroes had "seething brains." They longed to re-enter the Plain of Pleasure, where their loves dwelt in bliss.

Numerous instances, indeed, occur in Arthurian romance of a mortal frantic because separated from the otherworld lady with whom he had once enjoyed life, either on earth like Lanval, or in faery like Yvain. It was a *dame d'amour* who bleared the eye of Libeaus Desconus,‡ the brave

son of Gawain, with a succession of "shaping phantasies," finally transported him from her air-castle, the Golden Isle, and left him alone to languish in despair, until he was discovered by old comrades and brought back to the association of the Table Round. Such *dames d'amour* always infinitely transcend mortal ladies in beauty, and heroes under their spell grow suddenly so mad with love for them that ordinary women seem innocent of charm. Shakespeare pictures Cleopatra, "Serpent of old Nile," with the characteristics of a stately faery queen, and makes Antony, all as frantic as a madman, see "Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt." On the other hand, he could imagine a faery queen of a different sort, the tiny Mab galloping through lovers' brains, so that they dreamt of love.

It is significant that Shakespeare should join antique fables with fairy toys (trifles) dealing with love-frenzy, for there was, as he recognized, fundamental likeness between them. Irish fairy toys like the *Wooing of Etain* were felt to be so similar to the antique fable of Orpheus and Eurydice that the otherworld conceptions they embody were fused with it by the author of the Breton lay of which we have an English version called *Sir Orfeo*.* It is strangely true that "Orpheus' lute was strung with poets' sinews." If "the poet did

feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones," etc., it was because he was a great mythmaker, apprehending, what reason could not comprehend, conditions in the unseen world, the home of minstrelsy.

Theseus began his famous speech with the words "more strange than true." The truth of the beliefs in inspired madness does not here concern us. This is not a treatise on pathology but on poesy, not on heredity with respect to corporeal disease but with respect to spiritual imagination. Great poets, it is too often overlooked, are the heirs of one another in all the ages, and hand down in a sort of apostolic succession the faith of the elect. Hippolyta closed Theseus' discussion with words which may well be applied to poets' thoughts on inspiration:

> All their minds transfigur'd so together,
> More witnesseth than fancy's images,
> And grows to something of great constancy;
> But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

"The truest poetry is most feigning," * and tempts poets ever to new feigning along the lines of old suggestion. "The Muse," says Plato, "first gives to men inspiration herself; and from these inspired persons a chain of other persons is suspended, who take the inspiration from them. For all good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not as works of art, but because they are inspired

and possessed. And as the Corybantian revellers when they dance are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets are not in their right mind when they are composing their beautiful strains; but when falling under the power of music and metre they are inspired and possessed; like Bacchic maidens who draw milk and honey from the rivers when they are under the influence of Dionysus, but not when they are in their right mind. And the soul of the lyric poet does the same, as they themselves tell us; for they tell us that they gather their strains from honied fountains out of the gardens and dells of the Muses; thither, like the bees, they wing their way. And this is true. For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him: when he has not attained to this state, he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles. . . . God takes away the minds of poets, and uses them as his ministers, as he also uses diviners and holy prophets, in order that we who hear them may know that they speak not of themselves who utter these priceless words in a state of unconsciousness, but that God is the speaker, and that through them he is conversing with us. . . . The poets are only the interpreters of the gods by whom they are severally possessed."*

From the times when earliest recorded, myths have been treated as allegories. Plato saw the danger in the practice, but nevertheless indulged in it himself. Only he did not, as many stupid people have done since, transform them into something different from what they were. He upheld them as poetry, not as science, as feigning not as fact, thus reinvoking the imaginative daemon to whom they owed their first creation. There is nothing good to be said for the euhemerization or rationalization of myth, very little for its use to teach pedestrian morals; but the allegorization of myth, as Plato, Dante and other poetic thinkers have shown, may be profitable, as the myth in the beginning was profitable, in arousing men to a new sense of the mystery of the universe, in awaking oftener that dream-consciousness which is the best basis of transcendental emotion. Antique myth may even surpass to our advantage its primal importance if adorned by a great poetic, far-seeing mind.

In the belief of antiquity, every man had a genius, a tutelary demon, who was born with him, and there is sanction for other types of attendant *genii* in the mythology of Eastern nations. Gradually the word genius came to mean a quality that characterizes men of exceptional power, a capacity that cannot be acquired by education, an endow-

ment inexplicable on any ground of natural law. And *a* genius is now a person who stands apart from his fellows by some sort of divine right. For a considerable time, however, genius has been used by critics to denote a difference in grade among writers and taken to define a special degree of originality. Particularly from the eighteenth century on, it has been customary to contrast poets of genius with poets of talent, or parts, or learning, the former having "original unindebted energy" which might manifest itself supremely even in men who could neither read nor write. "A *genius*," said Edward Young, "differs from a good understanding as a magician from a good architect; *that* raises his structure by means invisible; *this* by the skilful use of common tools." "Learning we thank, genius we revere; That gives us pleasure, This gives us rapture; That informs, This inspires; and is itself inspired; for genius is from heaven, learning from man." "An inventive genius . . ., like the widow's cruse, is divinely replenished from within, and affords us a miraculous delight." *

Though scientific efforts are being made nowadays to link up genius with ordinary insanity,† what we fundamentally mean by distinctive and distinguishing genius, closely connected as it is with beliefs in inspiration, is as much a mystery to us as to the mythmakers of old. And even to-

day — this point needs emphasis — the language of critics regarding the same basic phenomena is largely determined by the mythic presentations of antiquity. We still constantly repeat in our discussion of authors words and phrases that properly connote primitive beliefs. Our books on poesy are shot through with terms implying notions set forth in myth.

We talk glibly to-day about the *gifts* of men of distinction. But a gift implies a giver; ancient myths told about benevolent deities who gave to them they favored. Our teachers and creative artists feel a *call* to their undertakings. Ancient myths told of embodied spirits or mysterious voices calling to mortals and bidding them speak, or write, or otherwise labor, with promise of success. Poets at least still cling to belief (feigned or true) in *oracles*, the old faith (as ever) moulding the expression of their thought.* We are prone to say that the works of sublime poets are a *revelation*, thinking of the visions of ancient worthies and the Apocalypse of St. John. Our great, we say, have peculiar *insight*, suggesting that their eyes have been opened by unusual experience. They have special *endowment*, or exalted *enthusiasm*, words which imply the indwelling of a god. They have *inspiration*, which shows that a deity has breathed into them the breath of poetic life.

So it is with the words that are regularly used to express heights of emotion and transcendental feeling — ecstasy, rapture, transport — qualities of poets whom we call celestial, heavenly, divine, poets who "ride upon seraph-wings," have voices "as of the cherub-choir," "speak the language of the gods."

If by predilection poets are pagan in fancy, they still invoke the inspiration of gods and muses, or perhaps the Mighty Mother, who, Gray imagined, did unveil her awful face to "the dauntless child," our greatest bard, and gave him gifts — golden keys, to ope the gates of joy and horror.* We lightly use phrases of sometime deep import when we talk of the "fount of wisdom," the "well of understanding," "the sacred source of sympathetic tears"; but we do not balk at the connotation of such phrases when it occurs to us, for we have long accustomed ourselves to their sound, and, in truth, the ways to obtain "the vision and the faculty divine" have varied little throughout the ages, no matter in what dispensation of the faith. The past and present in this matter notably join. Platonism and mysticism have linked hands for better for worse.†

The pious author of *The Christian Year* describes as a primary bard him who writes "for the most part from the impulse of his own passion,"

stating that he who as a rule writes otherwise is secondary, "howsoever superior in talent, weightier in theme, or more splendid in diction he may be." And to make his views clearer, he goes back willingly (as what Christian poet does not ?) " to the very infancy of the divine art " to see " what we may learn both from its intrinsic meaning and from the traditions of antiquity as to its origin."

After alluding to Horace's statement * that Democritus excluded from Helicon all poets in their senses, Plato's proposals for similar enactments, and Shakespeare's classing together of the lunatic, the lover, and the poet, Keble sets forth his view that only one who can skilfully and forcefully use perfect imitation, and exquisite harmony of subject and expression, *as a means to give healing and relief*, is to be called a poet.†

Keble, thus speaking, almost seems to be a son of Taliessin, for the bards who composed poems in the name of their mythical ancestor held similar views, though with far more inclination to divinity as shaping the ends of poetic impulse. " I deride neither song nor ministrelsy," said the author of one of these poems, " for they are given by God to lighten thought." In other songs thus put into the mouth of Taliessin appears prominently the view of the primary bard as one who had been mysteriously taught hidden art and wisdom. Administer-

ing a rebuke to the wisest of the court poets of Maelgwn who ventured to strive with him, he exclaims:

> Be silent, then, ye unlucky rhyming bards,
> For you cannot judge between truth and falsehood.
> If you be *primary bards formed by heaven*,
> Tell your king what his fate will be.
> It is I who am a diviner and a leading bard.

And he proceeds to prophesy what shall befall the king.

Taliessin alone is the diviner, he alone is able to tell the truth, because he has visited the underworld, the very home of poetic inspiration, and is "completely imbued with genius not to be controlled." *

> I have been fostered in the land of the Deity,
> I have been teacher to all intelligences,
> I am able to instruct the whole universe,
> I shall be until the day of doom on the face of the earth;
> And it is not known whether my body is flesh or fish.

Taliessin might be called the personification of Great Poesy, for it remains like him "a wonder whose origin is not known," and it ought to be clear by now that, whether its body be flesh or fish, due to inspiration or imitation, its soul derives, according to old faith, from the land of the Deity, where the first fathers of British verse were fostered.

When the Bard was asked whether he was man or spirit, " he sang this tale, and said:

First I have been formed a comely person,
In the court of Ceridwen *I have done penance;*
Though little I was seen, placidly received,
I was great on the floor of the place to where I was led;
I have been a prized defence, *the sweet muse the cause,*
And by law without speech I have been liberated
By a smiling black old hag, when irritated
Dreadful her claim when pursued."

We are far from knowing the full import of this myth of the culture quest, but we may without harm spiritualize it into a symbol of the quests of our own poets who after anxious striving have gained great reward. If the bards of old suffered in attaining a poetic and prophetic soul, they nevertheless exulted in its possession. It is the same today. The afflicted Milton knew but one answer to his question:

Who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
To perish rather, swallow'd up and lost
In the wide womb of uncreated night ?

Milton, nevertheless, like many another poet before and since, magnified the function of his kind. The bard, he proclaims, " shall be like a priest shining in sacred vestment, washed with lustral waters, who goes up to make augury before the

jealous gods. . . . Yea, for the bard is sacred to the gods: he is their priest. Mysteriously from his lips and breast he breathes Jove." * "Poets," said Shelley, with like transport, "are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present."

Though both these great writers may have had to struggle against a tendency to martyrize themselves, they were without question "inspired," in the true sense. But what shall we say of the numerous puny bards who have willingly abandoned themselves to the infatuation of self-centrement and sneeringly blamed the world for its (usually justified) indifference to them, because forsooth they are poets, therefore in the nature of things inspired beyond artists in other domains, and alone supremely capable of seeing visions and dreaming dreams?

Sheer devilish deceit, it would seem, afflicts the souls of modern poets who, presumptously imagining themselves geniuses and indulging in vain fantasies of their own importance, work themselves up into indiscreet fury over the world's neglect. The inspiration of such egotists differs as widely from that of the genuinely endowed as the melancholy of Jaques from that of Dante.† The truly holy prophets and poets through whom God

has chosen to speak since the world began, have not been so much occupied with their own misery as with that of the nations they sought to aid, have not been conceitedly petulant about being misunderstood for what this meant to them, but nobly solicitous because of their failure to convey their message potently, as instruments of the common profit, for what it meant to others.

Perhaps we have a symptom of the modern "dulcet disease" of romanticism in Shelley's words:

> Most wretched men
> Are cradled into poetry by wrong;
> They learn in suffering what they teach in song.*

But there was more than that in the ancient conceptions of "the disease that precedes the power to divine." Magnificent myths are based upon the idea of heroic, self-immolating human struggle for heavenly possessions with which to benefit mankind.

Among the myths destined to live forever is that of Prometheus' theft and transmission of the fire of the Immortals, if only because it is "full of promptings and suggestions" to modern as to ancient poets themselves aglow with "the divine fire."

> All is but a symbol painted
> Of the Poet, Prophet, Seer;
> Only those are crowned and sainted
> Who with grief have been acquainted,
> Making nations nobler, freer.

In an ancient Irish colloquy regarding the source of poetic inspiration,* the Young Poet, "wrapped in the robe of splendor," who comes "from the meeting-place of wisdom, from the place where goodness dwells serene, from the red sunrise of the dawn, where grow the nine hazels of poetic art," tells in symbol to the Old Poet, "Master of Wisdom," who moves "along the streams of inspiration" "into the lofty heights of honor, into the community of knowledge, into the fair country inhabited of noble sages, into the haven of prosperities" — the true pedigree of Poesy:

Poetry son of Investigation,
Investigation son of Meditation,
Meditation son of Lore,
Lore son of Research,
Research son of Inquiry,
Inquiry son of wide Knowledge,
Knowledge son of Good Sense,
Good Sense son of Understanding,
Understanding son of Wisdom,
Wisdom son of the three Gods of Poetry.

Who now can declare it better? Ultimately, Poesy descends from the gods.

Has there been progress in our conceptions of poesy? Plainly, we have still, even in this age of science, but at the dawn, let us hope, of an age of larger apprehension, an ineradicable sense of real

divinity in genius, that divinity which, as Iamblichus long ago observed, "seizes for the time the soul and guides it as he will."

Great Poesy, we conclude, is the ever-living teacher to all intelligences, because by miracle heaven-bred.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

Page 4. *Edinburgh and London, 1887, I, 173 ff.

Page 6. **Autobiography.* To Dr. Moore, 2d August, 1787; *Works*, ed. Douglas, IV, 7.

Page 6. †" Thirty-eight editions during a period of about 380 years sufficiently attest the uncommon popularity of the poem in Scotland " (J. T. T. Brown, *The Wallace and the Bruce Restudied, Bonner Beiträge zur Anglistik*, 1900, p. 2). For a complete list of the editions, with other bibliography, see William Geddie, *A Bibliography of Middle Scots Poets*, S. T. S., 1912, pp. 133 ff.

Page 8. *G. L. Craik, *Compendious History of English Literature*, London, 1861, I, 387.

Page 9. **Scottish Review*, July, 1893, XXII, 200 f.

Page 10. **Op. cit.*, pp. 77 ff.

Page 10. †Yet John Marquess of Bute, in 1876, suggested that " some clerk " may have had to do with the arrangement of the matter of the poem. In his *Early Days of Sir William Wallace* (p. 13), he writes of the author: " All his information had to get to him by means of other persons, and his digest of it had to reach the reading public by the same means. I do not know if any instance exists of a man born blind mastering a dead language; but if ever it did, it can hardly have done so in the fifteenth century, so that the poet was almost certainly dependent on a translator also. No doubt, the poem was also composed in scraps, and so written down. We know that he recited it publicly, and he was no doubt in the habit of choosing for this purpose those portions which he thought best adapted to each particular

occasion or audience. *Hence, the work is to be viewed rather as a series of stories about Sir William Wallace, told in verse and strung together with a rough attempt at chronological arrangement by some clerk.* I am inclined to hope that, next to some absolute mis-statements, its worst fault may be in the chronological arrangement."

In his long article on "Henry the Minstrel" in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Dr. Æneas Mackay remarks: "The poet speaks in his own person at its [the work's] close, and may have dictated it to the transcriber. His vivid descriptions have been thought by some incompatible with total blindness, but Major's statement, the best evidence on the point, would be confirmed by his using another hand to write his poem."

Page 10. ‡It has been shown that the manuscript written by Ramsay was not the author's original copy. See Aschauer, *Zur "Wallace"-Frage*, in *Beiträge zur Neueren Philologie*, Festschrift für Jakob Schipper, Vienna and Leipzig, 1902, pp. 132–145; G. Neilson, *Athenaeum*, Nov. 17, 1900, p. 647; Neilson, *Essays and Studies*, I, 86, note; *Athenaeum*, Feb. 9, 1901, pp. 170–171; T. F. Henderson, *Englische Studien*, XXX, 281 ff. Mr. Brown himself now apparently sets less store by his theory. In a letter to the *Athenaeum* (Nov. 24, 1900, p. 683) he writes: "The whole chapter, indeed, is a digression from the main question, viz., the relation of the *Wallace* and the *Bruce* to each other and to kindred literature."

Page 10. §For example, R. B. McKerrow (*Modern Language Quarterly*, V, 73–76); W. Hand Browne (*Modern Language Notes*, XVI, 50–54).

Page 11. *Third revised edition, Edinburgh, 1910, pp. 66 ff.

Page 12. *"On Blind Harry's *Wallace*," *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, I, Oxford, 1910, pp. 85, 87.

Page 12. †Deposited in the Harvard College Library. With this dissertation before them, Professors W. A. Neilson and

K. G. T. Webster, the editors of *Chief British Poets of the 14th and 15th Centuries* (Boston, 1916, p. 433), conclude: "It is on the whole safer to consider the authorship doubtful."

CHAPTER II

Page 14. *It may be that there was a rubric in the original manuscript (Ramsay's is only a copy) indicating the name of the author, or there may have been a passage at the end which is now lost.

The *Wallace* was printed, it appears, as early as *ca.* 1508. David Laing (Preface to his edition of *Golagros and Gawane*) describes some fragments of a copy of this edition; but they have been lost.

Page 14. †*Historia Majoris Britanniae* (*De Gestis Scotorum*), Paris, 1521; Edinburgh, 1740; trans. A. Constable (Pubs. Scottish Hist. Soc., Vol. X, Edinburgh, 1892), Bk. IV, ch. XV, p. 205.

Page 14. ‡*The History and Chronicles of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1821.

Page 14. §Ed. Turnbull, Record Series, III, 161–162.

Page 15. *He was born in 1469–70 at Gleghornie, near North Berwick. He died in 1549–50.

Page 16. *Introduction to Constable's translation, pp. lxiv, lxxxiv.

Page 17. *For Major's discussion of Robin Hood, see Bk. IV, ch. ii.

Page 17. †Cf. Neilson, p. 107.

Page 18. *The Latin here reads: "Integrum librum Guillelmi Vallacei Henricus a nativitate luminibus captus meae infantiae tempore cudit, et quae vulgo dicebantur carmine vulgari in quo peritus erat conscripsit (ego autem talibus scriptis solum in parte fidem impertior) qui historiarum recitatione coram principibus victum et vestitum quo dignus erat nactus est" (Lib. IIII, Fo. LXXIII).

Page 19. *It should be noticed that critics have read into Major's words more than there is any basis for. Consciously or unconsciously, all have encouraged the similitude to Homer that he started.

Page 20. *See Constable's translation, Index.

Page 20. †To avoid any appearance of warping it to fit the case, I give it in the words of Gayley (*Classic Myths*, Boston, 1911, pp. 451–452).

Page 20. ‡" Like Hannibal or Ulysses he understood to draw up an army in order of battle, while like another Telamonian Ajax he could carry on the fight in open field " (IV, 14, p. 196). " The poets have fabled that Achilles was brought up on the muscles of oxen, and not on partridges or pheasants. And William Wallace, as our chronicles have it, used to call for that part of oxen which they call the nineplies, and not for partridges or pheasants " (*In Quartum Sententiarum*, cited Constable, p. 195, note).

Page 21. *II, 6.

Page 21. †VI, 14, p. 366.

Page 22. *IV, 11; pp. 184–185.

Page 22. †I, 9.

Page 22. ‡According to Boece, this event took place B.C. 330. Canemor is probably for Teamor, the Themor of Fordun, now Temair, Tara. When Fordun gives the pedigree of King David (†1153), he traces it back, via Iber Scot and Gaythelos, to Gomer, Japhet and Noah (ed. Skene, 1872, II, 244 ff.). See *Wallace*, I, 121 ff.

Page 22. §See Skene's *Highlanders of Scotland*, ed. Macbain, 1902, pp. 178–188.

Page 23. *The editor notes: " All attempts to identify Conus have failed," and states his belief that it is a scribal error. On Conn, see below, ch. v.

Page 23. †Cf. Small's edition of Dunbar, I, ccxliii. In the Treasurer's Accounts of the years 1491–1506 are various items showing the interest of royalty in the Erse clareshaws and harpers. About 1490, Angus, son of John, last Lord of the Isles, was slain by his own harper.

Page 23. ‡Ed. Amours, *Scottish Alliterative Poems*, S.T.S., 1897, pp. 74, 312 f. The passage ends:

> O Deremyne, O Donnall, O Dochardy droch;
> Thir ar his Irland kingis of the Irischerye:
> O Knewlyn, O Conochor, O Gregre Makgrane;
> The Schenachy, the Clarschach,
> The Ben schene, the Ballach,
> The Crekery, the Corach,
> Scho kennis thaim ilkane.

Blind Harry knew better than we who these persons were, and "kenned each one" — the sennachie, the clareshaw, the banshee, and the rest. For Campbell's interpretation of the passage, see Brown, p. 32.

Blind Harry pictures an English soldier as accosting Wallace with an ironical Gaelic salutation in which some of the same phrases occur (Bk. VI, l. 140). Cf. Brown, pp. 31–32. Many of Wallace's followers were from the Highlands.

Page 23. §*Poems*, ed. Cranstoun, p. 220. A poem attributed to Montgomery (p. 280) explains

> How the first Helandman of God was maid
> Of ane horss turd, in Argylle, as is said.

Page 24. *Ll. 345ff. Dunbar derides Kennedy, of Ayrshire, as a mere countryman, whose lips could blabber only the "Ershry." He makes the Dwarf of the Interlude say:

> Yrland for evir I haif reffusit,
> All wyismen will hald me excusit,
> For nevir in land quhair Eriche was vsit,
> To dwell had I dellyte. (Ll. 109ff.)

Page 24. †Ed. Small, p. 121, ll. 113ff.

Page 25. **Monarchie*, Bk. I, ll. 327–329.

CHAPTER III

Page 26. *Ed. J. Schipper, *The Poems of William Dunbar*, Vienna, 1891, pp. 190 ff.; ed. John Small, Scottish Text Society, 1884–93, Edinburgh and London, II, 314 ff; ed. David Laing, *Select Remains of the Ancient Popular and Romance Poetry of Scotland*, ed. Small, 1885, pp. 296 ff.

Page 26. †This is Laing's and Schipper's text, following the Asloan MS., here obviously the best. Small, in his edition (II, 314) reads somewhat differently:

> Bot ȝit I trow that I vary,
> I am *bot ane* Blynd Hary,
> That lang hes bene with the fary
> Farlyis to fynd.

And the first two lines he thus curiously mistranslates (III, 378): "But yet I believe *truly* that I am but another Blind Harry," thus losing the real point of the situation.

Page 27. *Professor G. Gregory Smith, who has no doubt that the poem is by Dunbar, writes: "The more gorgeous Gargantua, who required but 'nine hundred ells of Chasteleraud linen, and two hundred for gussets' for his shirt, and 'eight hundred and thirteen ells of white satin' for his doublet, must have admired his Ossianic neighbour had he heard of him. And it is doubtful whether the ever-excellent Rabelais had the poetic fancy which added the conceit of the tiara of stars. There is plenty of that topsy-turvy mystical humour which some in compliment call Celtic, but the piece is never too literary for the plain man who clamoured for sheer fun and reality" (*The Transition Period*, 1900, p. 294).

Is the humor of Dunbar only "in compliment called Celtic"? There is as much that is "topsy-turvy" as there is "mystical" in the Celtic imagination, as much of the grotesque as of the finely-shaded, as much of the boisterous and coarse as of the subdued and subduing. The debt of Scottish poetry to the temper and traditions of the Gaels has never been sufficiently emphasized.

Page 28. *Introduction in his edition, p. 190; cf. his *William Dunbar*, Berlin, 1884, pp. 207–215.

Page 28. †"As," he says, "we may conclude from the epithets *mandrag*, *mymmerkin* (v. 29), *ignorant elf* (v. 36), *duerch* (v. 491) and others given him by Kennedy in 'The Flyting.'" But this is hardly conclusive.

Page 28. ‡Introduction to Small's edition, I, lxxxii.

Page 29. *Cf. his *William Dunbar*, p. 207; edition, Pt. II, p. 192; Small, III, 378.

Page 30. **Wallace and Bruce Restudied*, p. 9.

Page 30. †"Faery" was used in various senses in Middle-English. It is a locality (as in the Interlude) in *Sir Guy:*

> Here beside an elfish knight
> Hath taken my lord in fight,
> And hath him led with him away
> Into the Faerie, Sir, par ma fay.

Chaucer used it as a locality in the Squire's Tale, where he speaks of Gawain's coming back "out of faerie." Cf. "the contree of fairye" in *Sir Thopas*. The phrase "of faerie," on the other hand, seems to mean "of fairy origin," "due to fairy contrivance," in the line where, speaking of the horse of brass, the poet remarked: "It was of faerie, as the peple semed"; cf. *William of Palerne*, ed. Skeat. l. 230; *Piers Plowman*, ed. Skeat, II, 3 f. In the following lines from *Emare*, it is equivalent to "illusion."

> The Emperor sayd on hygh
> Sertes thys ys a fayry
> Or ellys a vanyté (103 ff.).

See Thomas Keightley, *The Fairy Mythology*, Bohn Library, 1850, pp. 8 ff. The A text of *Piers Plowman* in the passage quoted (l. 6) reads "a feyrie"; the B text, "of fairy."

Page 32. *Perhaps we ought always to call him the Droich, for the form of the name is Gaelic, and in itself suggests its Celtic origin.

Page 33. *See D'Arbois de Jubainville, *Cycle Mythologique*, pp. 244–245; also *Transactions of the Ossianic Society for 1857*, V, 234; Charles Squire, *The Mythology of the British Islands*, London, Glasgow and Dublin, 1905, pp. 123 ff.; *Book of Leinster*, 12 b.

Page 34. *"Battle of the Trees," Poem VIII in the *Book of Taliessin* (Skene, *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, I, 276). The passage next quoted is from a poem in the prose tale of *Taliesin* (Nutt, *Mabinogion*, p. 307). This tale, though based on material of the most primitive sort, is a sixteenth-century production, and even the poems it contains have been greatly modified by the intrusion of Biblical and mediaeval lore; see Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, II, 84 ff. See pp. 244–245, below.

Page 34. †Compare the Dwarf's words "I am cum heir" to Scotland, which was part of "the remnant of Troia." When he leaves, he promises to come again soon. There is no indication that he is near the end of his days.

Page 35. *In an anonymous insertion in Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcrafte*, London, 1665, Bk. II, ch. 4; ed. B. Nicholson, London, 1886, p. 511.

Page 35. †*Ibid.*, pp. 485 ff. The same writer speaks (p. 473) of "astral spirits as fairies, nymphs, and ghosts of men."

Page 36. *Bk. VII, ch. 15; ed. Nicholson, p. 122.

Page 37. *C Text, XVI, 163 ff.; cf. Skeat's edition, II, 197 f.; cf. Chaucer, Nun's Priest's Tale, l. 116; "The bug which you would fright me with" (*Winter's Tale*, III, ii, 93); "A bugbear take him!" (*Troilus and Cressida*, IV, 2); Marston, *Antonio's Revenge*, III, i, 134–135:

> He will not sleepe, but calls to followe you,
> Crying that bug-beares and spirits haunted him.

In *Leechdoms* (ed. Cokayne, III, 38–41) is a recipe against the attack by a dwarf, i.e. convulsions.

Page 37. †*Epithalamion*, ll. 341 ff. Note Ben Jonson's "Pug" in *The Devil is an Ass*. Cf. Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part I, sect. 2, mem. 1, subsect. 2.

Page 38. *Chaucer terms the Pardoner a "belamy," and perhaps the word in his case means more than has ordinarily been thought. Cf. "Seie, quaþ the admiral, belamy, Ho makede þe so hardy" (*Floris and Blancheflor*, l. 633); "Belamy, let be thy din" (Satan to Christ, *Towneley Mysteries*, p. 251). Chaucer's Manciple was "a boystous man." The word appears to be of Celtic origin (Welsh *boystus*, wild, ferocious), and is commonly used in Scots. Beldame has had a similar history to belamy. Whittier writes in his *New England Legend* (quoted Century Dictionary):

> Our witches are no longer old
> And wrinkled beldames, Satan-sold.

Page 38. †V, 1102 f.

Page 39. *See below, p. 71.

Page 39. †See Roscher's *Ausführliches Lexicon*, I, 3019 ff.; Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 130 f., 273, 600 n.

Page 39. ‡*Justing and Debait up at the Drum Betuix William Adamsone and Johine Sym* (ed. Cranstoun, Scottish Text Society, p. 9). Hercules, it may be noted, like Wallace (according to Blind Harry's account), is said to have worn the garments of a woman and spun wool. Moreover, in patriotic indignation he cut off the noses and ears of the envoys of King Erginus of Orchomenos, on their way to demand tribute of the Thebans.

Page 39. §Ed. J. Payne Collier, for the Percy Society, 1841; ed. Frank Sidgwick, *The Sources and Analogues of 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream,'* 1908, pp. 81 ff.; see particularly 87–88, 97, 101, 109 ff. Hector Boece has a passage on Robin and other familiar spirits.

Page 40. *Robin's habitual cry, "ho, ho, ho," which Shakespeare gives to his shape-shifting Puck, reminds us of the cry of the Dwarf in opening the Interlude:

> Hiry, hary, hubbilschow!
> See quha is cum now.

The "hary" here seems to be the old French exclamation "harou."

Page 40. †Ed. Laing, *Select Remains*, pp. 267 ff. There was a ruler of the *aes sidhe* named Boadach who dwelt in the Plain of Delight which Connla visited for love of a beautiful damsel; see Nutt, *Voyage*, I, 145, 175. Jobath, son of Beothach, penetrated the underworld, like Gwydion and Cuchulinn; see Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 262. There are curious likenesses between the story of Berdok's trip to ravish the "golk" (cuckoo) of faery and Odin's visit to Gunnlöd in Snorri's Edda (trans. A. G. Brodeur, N. Y., 1916, pp. 94 ff.)

Page 41. *Imperfectly preserved in the *Percy Folio MS.*, ed. Hales and Furnivall, I, 88 ff.

Page 41. †The Isle of Man was long identified with the otherworld. See Rhŷs, *Arthurian Legend*, p. 355. "According to some accounts, the Isle of Man as a mythic country was that called the Isle of the Men of Falga or Failge, over whom reigned Mider, king of the fairies, when Cúchulainn carried away his daughter Bláthnat, together with his Cauldron and his Three Cows that filled it with their milk. This name of Failge was otherwise explained to mean the Western Isles of Scotland. It may also have been identified with the mythic City of Falias, from which the Tuatha Dé Danann were said to have brought to Ireland one of their treasures, the *Lia Fáil* (Keating, Dublin, 1880, pp. 112–119)." Cf. Waldron, *Description of the Isle of Man*, London, 1731. Collins wrote (*Ode to Liberty*):

> Mona once hid from those that search the main,
> Where thousand elfin shapes abide.

Page 41. ‡We learn of the Ghost of Guy from a Latin tract, the *Spiritus Guidonis*, apparently of the year 1323, which is extant in an English prose translation in the Vernon Manuscript of the fourteenth century, as well as in a later metrical version. Both the latter were printed by Horstmann in his *Yorkshire Writers*, London, 1896, II, 292 ff. Cf. Dyce's edition of Skelton (II, 185) for other references to him.

Page 43. *Eyre-Todd (*Scottish Poetry of the Sixteenth Century*, p. 29) notes unwisely: "Perhaps the Sir Guy of romance."

Page 43. †Ed. Laing, *Select Remains*, pp. 208 ff. — The giants Gotmagot and Corineus appear in a London pageant at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1559; see E. K. Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage*, Oxford, 1903, II, 172.

Page 44. *Rev., XX, 7–8.

Page 44. †Bk. I, ch. 16; cf. Alex. Scott's remark about Hercules, above p. 39. On Gog Magog, see Wyntoun, I, vii, 341 ff., I, x, 583 ff.

Page 44. ‡At the end of the story of Cuchulinn's Sick Bed, in the *Book of the Dun Cow*, we read: "The demoniac power was great before the faith, and such was its greatness that the demons used to fight bodily against mortals, and they used to show them delights and secrets of how they would be in immortality." See Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, I, 157, Tylor points out that "Augustine, in an instructive passage, states the popular notions of the visits of incubi, vouched for, he tells us, by testimony of such quantity and quality that it may seem impudence to deny it: yet he is careful not to commit himself to a positive belief in such spirits. Later theologians were less cautious, and grave argumentation on nocturnal intercourse with incubi and succubi was carried on till, at the height of mediaeval civilization, it is found accepted in full belief by ecclesiastics and lawyers. Nor is it to be counted as an ugly but harmless superstition, when for example it is set forth in the Bull of Pope Innocent VIII. in 1484, as an accepted accusation against 'many persons of both sexes, forgetful of their own salvation, and falling away from the Catholic faith'" (*Primitive Culture*, 4th ed., II, 190–191; cf. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XV, 23).

Page 44. §Bishop Carswell, in his preface to his Gaelic version of the Prayer-book for the reformed Church of Scotland, which was printed in Edinburgh in 1567, lamenting the absence of printed Gaelic books, remarks: "Great is the blindness and darkness of sin and ignorance and understanding among composers and writers and supporters of

the Gaelic, in that they prefer and practice the framing of vain, hurtful, lying earthly stories, about the Tuath de Danand, about the sons of Miled, and about the heroes and Finn Mac Cumhaill with his giants, and about many others whom I shall not number or tell of here in detail, in order to maintain and advance these, with a view to obtaining for themselves passing worldly gain, rather than to write and to compose and to support the faithful words and the perfect way of truth. For the world loves the lie much more than the truth " (Stern, *Die Ossianischen Heldenlieder*, trans. J. L. Robertson, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, XXII, 1897–98, p. 293).

Page 45. *Ed. Andrew Lang, London, 1893, p. 26. Kirk was a student of theology at St. Andrews, took his M.A. at Edinburgh, and afterwards became a minister at Aberfoyle. In 1684 he published a Psalter in Gaelic. He was reputed not to have died, but to have been made a captive in a *shi*, or fairy hill. Lang thought (Introduction, p. xxiii) the subterranean inhabitants of Kirk's book " a lingering memory of the Chthonian beings, ' the Ancestors.' " " Fairyland," he explained, " was a kind of Hades, or home of the dead."

Page 45. †Patrick Joyce (*Social History of Ireland*, I, 273 f.) calls attention to the fact that Jocelin of Furness, who wrote a life of St. Patrick in the twelfth century tells us that before the Saint came " Ireland was deemed the special home of demons. . . . The magician, evil-doers, and soothsayers abounded beyond what history records of any other country on the face of the earth." And he himself adds: " What with Dedannan gods, with war-gods and goddesses, apparitions, demons, sprites of the valley, ordinary ghosts, spectres, and goblins, fairies of various kinds — sheevras, leprechauns, banshees, and so forth — there appears to have been quite as numerous a population belonging to the spiritual world as of human beings. In those old pagan days, Ireland was an eerie place to live in; and it was high time for St. Patrick to come." What was true in this respect of Ireland, was true also of Celtic Scotland.

Page 45. ‡*The Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare*, London, 1900, pp. 10, 25, 32. For the use of Robin Goodfellow as the pseudonym of the publisher of Tarlton's *Jests out of Purgatory*, a work sometimes attributed to Nash, see below, p. 110.

Page 47. *Ed. and trans. Kuno Meyer.

Page 48. *Dunbar, ed. Small, II, 5; *Wallace*, VII, 350.

Page 48. †Merchant's Tale, ll. 794 ff., 983. *Sir Orfeo* shows well how classical tales were made over to resemble those of the Celts. See Kittredge, *American Journal of Philology*, VII, 176 ff.

Though Sir Orfeo is represented as a king of England with his capitol at Winchester, we read (ll. 29 ff.):

> His fader was comen of king Pluto,
> And his moder of [quene] Juno,
> That sum time were as godes y-hold,
> For aventours that thai dede and told.

In a Scottish interlude, called *The Laying of Lord Fergus's Gaist* (Laing, *Select Remains*, pp. 306 ff.) "Orpheus king and Elpha quene" are said to be the offspring of a little ghost; cf. Scott's *Minstrelsy*, 1803, I, clx ff.

Page 48. ‡"Institit homuncio capro maximo secundum fabulam insidens, vir qualis describi posset *Pan*, ardenti facie, capite maximo, barba rubente prolixa, pectus contingenteque, nebride preclarum stellata, cui venter hispidus, et crura pedes in caprinos degenerabant (*De Nugis Curialium*, Dist. I, ch. xi, ed. M. R. James, p. 13). This faery dwarf himself says: "Ego rex multorum regum et principum, innumerabilis et infiniti populi."

Page 48. §"Insuper dubitatur: an possunt futura predicere; et movetur dubitatio. Sunt aliqui apud nostrates Britannos qui more prophetico predicunt utpote de morte et homicidio aliquorum" (*Exposition of Matthew*, ed. 1518, fol. xlviii; cited by Constable, Introd., p. xxx, note 2).

Page 49. *See on the whole matter of the Kouretes and the cult of Dionysus, Jane E. Harrison, *Themis*, Cambridge,

1912. Brand tells us that in his time (1701) fairies were frequently seen in the Orkneys "in armour," dancing and making merry. This is significant, especially when we remember that Luridan was the chief of Orkney brownies.

Page 49. †In *Themis*, p. 343.

Page 49. ‡J. G. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 3d. ed., Part VII, Vol. I, pp. 226 ff.; *Encyc. Brit.* under Hallowe'en.

Page 49. §*Poems*, ed. Cranstoun, S.T.S., p. 69. The lines were quoted by King James in his *Reulis and Cautelis*, with some variations. See the editor's note, p. 312: "a vivid picture of the hellish host in one of their midnight revels." Cf. Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale:

> In tholde dayes of the king Arthour,
> Of which that Britons speken greet honour,
> Al was this land fulfild of fayerye.
> The elf-queen, with hir joly companye,
> Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede.

Cf. further Thomson, in *The Castle of Indolence*, I, 30:

> As when a shepherd of the Hebrid-Isles,
> Placed far amid the melancholy main,
> (Whether it be lone fancy him beguiles,
> Or that aerial beings sometimes deign
> To stand embodied, to our senses plain),
> Sees on the naked hill, or valley low,
> The whilst in Ocean Phœbus dips his wain,
> A vast assembly moving to and fro;
> Then, all at once, in air, dissolves the wondrous show.

Page 50. *The editors of the S.T.S. edition of Dunbar (Introduction, pp. ccxxxiii f.; cf. lxxxii f.) connect the Interlude with the festivities in honor of the Princess Margaret who was married to King James August 8, 1503, and suggest a secret meaning to the poem. But there is little likelihood in this. All that we can be sure of is that it was written for, or adapted for, some festival in Edinburgh, which is much praised not only as "the lamp and a per se of this region, in all degree of welfare and of honesty, renown and rich

array," but also as the place "where is merriest cheer, plesance, disport, and play." (Compare Burns's praise of Auld Ayr in *Tam.*) The "amiable audience" whom "the god of most magnificence is asked to conserve," was made up of

> Prowest, baillies, officeris,
> And honerable induellaris,
> Marchandis and familiaris
> Of all this fair towne,

who thus were invited to join in a Robin Hood, and therefore perhaps a May-day, celebration:

> ȝe noble merchandis ever ilkane
> Address ȝow furth with bow and flane
> In lusty grene lufraye,
> And follow furth on Robyn Hude.

Chambers thought the piece "clearly a 'banns' for a May-game" (*Mediaeval Stage*, II, 455).

Stubbes, in his *Anatomy of Abuses* (1585), wrote: "Against Maie, every parishe, towne, and village, assemble themselves together, bothe men, women, and children, olde and yonge, even all indifferently, and either going all together or devidyng themselves into companies, they goe, some to the woodes and groves, some to the hills and mountaines, some to one place, some to another, where they spend all the night in pastimes; in the morninge they return, bringinge with them birche, bowes and branches of trees, to deck their assemblies withalle" (ed. Furnivall, p. 149; quoted Skeat, Works of Chaucer, V, 65).

Page 51. *See Gilbert Murray on the Prologue in Greek drama in Miss Harrison's *Themis*, pp. 359 ff., especially 361.

Page 51. †Trans. A. S. Way, 1912, III, 1.

Page 53. **Studies of the Gods in Greece*, London, 1891, p. 145. Of the *Bacchanals*, Dyer says: "It may be called the Passion-play of Attica, and it has been compared to the medieval morality" (pp. 136–137). Milton was fond of it.

CHAPTER IV

Page 56. *See J. A. H. Murray, *Thomas of Erceldoune*, E.E.T.S., 1875, pp. 52 ff.

Page 56. †In another version in the *Whole Prophesie of Scotland*, the "little man" who reveals the ferlys is Thomas Rhymer himself. See Murray, *Ibid.*, pp. 48 ff. — Printed in 1603 and later.

Page 57. **Itinerary through Wales*, Bk. I, Ch. V.

Page 58. *Cf. Murray, pp. xxxvii f.; Taylor, p. 73. Even so Tuan Mac Cairill, surviving his kin, wandered over the hills, living in caves, until old age betook him, "hairy, clawed, withered, grey, naked, wretched, miserable." Finally, after "varying" into different shapes, he was baptized by St. Patrick, not, we presume, without satisfying all the Saint's questions. See *Voyage of Bran*, II, 76 ff., 285 ff.

Page 58. †See Ward, *Romania*, XXII (1893), 504 ff.; F. Lot, *Annales de Bretagne*, XV (1899), 336 ff. Lailoken was identified with Merlin in the Middle Ages in Scotland, e.g., by Fordun, in the *Scotichronicon*.

Page 59. *Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, II, 227, Kirk (*Secret Commonwealth*, ed. A. Lang, p. 16) speaks of "the Tabhaisver or Seer" that can conjure up familiar spirits. Does this indicate the origin of the name ?

Page 59. †See Murray, pp. xvi f.

Page 59. ‡Really an Anglo-Norman poet, and a great one. See Schofield, *Eng. Lit. from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer*, pp. 203 ff.

Page 60. *He has gone through various transformations, finally becoming "a mother-naked man."

Page 60. †In the following passage descriptive of the treatment of Libeaus Desconus by the Lady of the Golden Isle, a mistress of "sorcery," who regaled the hero with "melody

of all minstrelsy," the blearing of the eye was a sign of her fairy power, meaning more than merely to delude, or cajole, as is usually thought:

> With fantasme and fairie
> Þus sche blered his iȝe.

(*Libeaus Desconus*, ed. Kaluza, ll. 1522–1523).

Supernatural beings had control over the eyesight of mortals. They could transiently "blear" their eyes, or make them permanently blind.

Page 60. ‡*Flateyjarbók*, Christiania, 1860, I, 339–362; cf. Rydberg, *Teutonic Mythology*, pp. 210–211; Nutt, *Voyage*, I, 298; Saxo Grammaticus, trans. Elton and Powell, p. lxviii. In the same Saga we read of a blind old man in the island of Moster "who was reported to have great foresight and prophetic power." He prophesies the loss in one voyage of the Norsemen of four things "the most noble of their kind that ever came into the land" (trans. Sephton, pp. 399 f.; cf. Vigfusson, *Sturlunga Saga*, p. lxxxiii).

Page 60. §*Secret Commonwealth*, ed. Lang, p. 13. Kirk tells among "instances of undoubted verity" the case of a woman who "lived in the country next to that of my last residence," who returned to her husband after having been in faery. "Among other reports she gave her husband, this was one: that she perceived little what they did in the spacious house she lodged in, until she anointed one of her eyes with a certain unction that was by her; which they perceiving to have acquainted her with their actions, they fain'd [?] her blind of that eye with a puff of their breath. She found the place full of light, without any fountain or lamp from whence it did spring" (p. 34). For other cases of mortals struck blind by fairies, see Keightley, pp. 298, 303, 312, 354; Child, *Ballads*, I, 339; II, 505; III, 505; Rhŷs, *Celtic Folklore*, I, 99; etc. To these last cases I have been referred by Professor Kittredge.

Page 61. **Secret Commonwealth*, ed. Lang, p. 23.

Page 61. †See Keightley, pp. 387 f.

Page 62. *J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, new edition, Paisley and London, 1893, IV, 34 f.; cf. II, 113. In Scottish tradition the abode of Thomas Rhymer is identified with that of the Feinne; see J. G. Campbell, *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, 1900, p. 270, note 1.

Page 63. **Bruce*, III, 68 ff. "The Lowland poet here remarks," says Campbell, "that he might 'mar manerlik' have 'liknit' him to Gaudifer de Larys, and narrates an exploit performed by that hero of romance, which he knew, and thought a better illustration of Bruce's valour. . . . The passage refers to the strife which, according to tradition, was constantly going on between Goll Macmorna and Fionn; and the Lord of Lorne (Mac Cowl) spoke according to his lights, to men who understood what he meant. Irish history claims a real existence for Fionn and Goll, and modern Lowland stories have added supernatural incidents to the real history of the Bruce and Wallace" (*Popular Tales*, IV, 47–48).

Page 63. †Ed. Small, I, 65.

Page 64. *Colville, in his *Whigs' Supplication* (1681), brings Wallace into connection with Fyn MacCowl.

> One man, quoth he, ofttimes hath stood,
> And put to flight a multitude,
> Like Samson, Wallace, and Sir Bewis,
> And Fyn MacCowl beside the Lewis (Hebrides).

Hector Boece remarks (*Scot. Hist.*, l. 7, fols. 128–129, Fol. Par. 1574 — quoted Comm. High. Soc., p. 22, note): "Coniiciunt quidam in haec tempora Fynnanum filium Coeli (Fyn makCoul, vulgari vocabulo) virum, uti ferunt immani statura (septenum enim cubitorum hominem fuisse narrant) Scotici sanguinis, venatoria arte insignem, omnibusque insolita corporis mole formidolosum: circularibus fabulis, et iis quae de Arthuro Britonum rege, passim apud nostrates leguntur, simillimum, magis quam eruditorum testimonio *decantatum*. Huius itaque viri mirabilibus, quod ab historica fide haud parum abhorrere omnibus sunt visa,

consulto supersedentes, Eugenij regis gesta deinceps prosequemur."

Page 64. †Cf. Alfred Nutt, *Ossian and the Ossianic Literature*, London, 1819, pp. 39 f.: "I see no reason for doubting that the visit of Oisin to the Land of Youth, and his return to earth, were early component parts of the Fenian cycle. In one of the chief monuments of that cycle, the *Agallamh na Senórach*, or Colloquy with the Ancients, preserved in fourteenth century MSS., and probably a composition of the thirteenth century, the living on of Oisin and Caoilte into Patrician times is definitely indicated. . . . And a supernaturally prolonged life is presupposed by the extensive body of Ossianic poetry, which brings the hero in contact with St. Patrick, and which must be at least as old as the fourteenth century, as it is found in an obviously worndown condition in the Book of the Dean of Lismore" (*Voyage of Bran*, I, 151–152).

For oral versions of the story, see *Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the year 1856*, Dublin, 1859, p. 233; Henry Charles Coote, "The Neo-Latin Fay" in *The Folk-Lore Record*, London, 1879, II, 15 ff. Also Patrick Kennedy, *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*, London, 1866, pp. 240 ff.; J. Curtin, *Myths and Folk-Lore of Ireland*, Boston, 1890, pp. 327 ff. Joyce, *Old Celtic Romances*, 1879, pp. 385 ff.

Page 65. *Ossian returns as he came on a magic horse, through the air. The steed that Tam Lin rode was "lighter than the wind." Even so, Dunbar's Dwarf, alias Blind Harry, could "go by the sky light as the lynd."

Page 66. **Silva Gadelica*, trans. Standish Hayes O'Grady, II, 290–291; cf. Meyer and Nutt, *Voyage of Bran*, I, 180 ff.; D'Arbois, *Cycle Mythologique*, p. 365.

Page 66. †*Voyage of Bran*, I, 135 ff.

Page 67. *Ed. Gaston Paris, *Romania*, VIII (1879), 50 ff. See Schofield, *Lay of Guingamor* (*Harvard Studies and Notes*, V, 221 ff.).

Page 67. †It was believed that to eat the food of faery folk put one in their power. It was because Persephone ate fruit in the garden of Hades that she was condemned to become his wife. By drinking ale in faery Loegaire was made one of the people there. When Connla ate a faery apple he longed irresistibly for his Elysium. See also pp. 66, 253. Gaston Paris remarks: "Dans *Baudouin de Sebourc* les fruits merveilleux du paradis terrestre rapellent plus directment la légende primitive; mais ils ont perdu leur vraie signification; ceux que produit l'un des arbres rajeunissent, ceux que donne l'autre viellissent en un moment" (*Romania*, VIII, 51.).

Page 68. *Guingamor, however, was not left thus disconsolate on earth. The fay sent two maidens to put him back on his horse and take him to a boat, which carried him across the river to her abode, yet not without blaming him for his offense.

Likewise Lanval and Graelent each suffered for disobeying his fairy mistress's commands. (See Schofield, *The Lays of Graelent and Lanval, Publ. Mod. Lang. Ass'n of America*, XV, 130 ff.). Yvain's madness had originally something to do with his separation from the fay Lunete.

Page 68. †Ed. T. Wright, p. 16 f.; ed. M. R. James, 1914, pp. 13 ff., Dist. 1, ch. xi.

Page 68. ‡Even so the fabulous Old Norse Yngling King Swegdir, in search of Odin, was pictured as accepting the invitation of a dwarf to enter a stone, at the door of which the latter stood. As Snorri tells us in the *Heimskringla* (trans. Morris and Magnusson, I, 25–26): "Swegdir ran into the stone and it shut behind him straightway and Swegdir never came back."

Page 69. *F. Lot thinks it was (*Romania*, XXXII, 441 note; cf. A. C. L. Brown, *Iwain*, pp. 110, 119). The "Fairy-Rade" was familiar in the Highlands; see Keightley, pp. 354 f., 384.

Page 69. †See Adam de la Halle's *Jeu de la Feuillée*, written in 1262 (ed. Langlois, Paris, 1911). Cf. Driesen, *Ursprung des Harlekin*, Berlin, 1904; Child, *Ballads*, I, 321.

It was surely as a leader of the Wild Chase that Sir Orfeo saw

> The king o Fairi with his rout,
> Com to hunt him al about,
> With dun cri and bloweing,
> And houndes also with him berking.
> Ac no best thai no nome,
> No never he nist whider thai bicome.

Page 69. ‡Ed. Hales and Furnivall, *Percy Folio MS.*, I, 341 ff.

Page 69. §Her name Loosepain, given her, according to the romancer, because "a better leech was none certaine," may be a corruption of Luchorpain, another (perhaps the more original) form of Luchorcan. The name "Châtelain de Coucy" was translated in a late English romance "Knight of Courtesy!"

Page 69. ‖See Schofield, *Eng. Lit. from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer*, pp. 232 f.

Page 70. *See *Romania*, VIII, 51; Keightley, pp. 46 ff.

Page 70. †See Malory, *Morte Darthur*, Bk. XXI; cf. for the case of Connla, son of Conn, below, p. 253.

Page 70. ‡*Fall of Princes*, Bk. VIII, ch. 25.

Page 70. §*Origins of English History*, ch. X.

Page 71. *Child, *Ballads*, I, 329 ff. On Oberon, see Keightley, pp. 38 ff.

Page 72. *Here the "little man" is given clothing, which is described in curious detail; but in the ballad he was evidently naked.

> His legs were skant a shathmont lang
> Yet umber was his thie;
> Between his brows there was ae span,
> And between his shoulders three.

Page 72. †See the *Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, ed. Thomas Wright, Rolls Series, London, 1866, II, 452, where the prophecies are given. Cf. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances*, I, 300; Rupert Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, New York, 1911, pp. 65 ff.

Page 72. ‡The Dwarf says:

I haif bene formest evir in feild,
And now sa lang I haif borne scheild
That *I am crynit in for eild*
This littill, as ȝe may sie.

Page 73. **Roman de Merlin*, ed. Sommer, London, 1894, pp. 438 ff. Merlin repeatedly changed his shape (see *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 67 ff., 79, 130, 191, 302, 432). In one case he appears in the form of a wild man (*omme salvage*), interprets dreams, delivers prophecies, and fools the court of Rome (see the long account of the episode, *Ibid.*, pp. 302–311). In the *Roman* (p. 491) Gawain also appears transformed as a dwarf, and is only released from his shrivelled condition by following Merlin's advice. Arthur dubs an ugly dwarf, who was the son of the King of Brangoire (pp. 452 ff., 485 ff.).

Page 74. **Silva Gadelica*, II, 269 ff. — "The Death of Fergus." In Jubhdan's lay of his treasures, he thus describes his timpan: "My timpan, O my timpan, endowed with string-sweetness, from the red-sea's borders! Within its wires resides minstrelsy to delight all women of the universe. Whosoe'er should in the matter of tuning up my timpan be suddenly put to the test, if never hitherto he had been a man of art yet would the instrument of itself perform the minstrel's functions. Ah how melodious is its martial strain, and its low cadence ah how sweet! All of itself too how it plays, without a finger on a single string of all its strings."

Page 74. †*Trans. of the Ossianic Society*, IV (1856), pp. 5, 215.

Page 75. *In the *Colloquy of the Elders* (*Silva Gadelica*, II, 115 ff.).

Page 75. †Together with Cnu Deireoil and Blathnait his wife, Caeilte enumerates the following minstrels of Finn, about whom little is known: "Daighre mac Morna, Der ua Daighre, Senach ua Daighre, Suanach son of Senach, and Suanach that was Finn mac Cumall's reciter of old tales

and the sweetest that in Ireland or Scotland ever handled timpan" (*Silva Gadelica*, II, 229 f.; cf. p. 240). That they were all faery folk is clear from the following account of that master musician of Ireland, the Kern of the Narrow Stripes, in which two of the above list reappear (*Silva Gadelica*, II, 313):

"He with that taking an instrument made symphony so gently sweet, and in such wise wakened the dulcet pulses of the harp, that in the whole world all women labouring of child, all wounded warriors, mangled soldiers, and gallant men gashed about — with all in general that suffered sore sickness and distemper — might with the witching charm of this his modulation have been lapped in stupor of slumber and of soundest sleep. 'By Heaven's grace again,' exclaimed O'Donnell, 'since first I heard the fame of them that within the hills and under the earth beneath us make the fairy music — such as are Finn mac Forgy, and Shennach O'Dorgy, and Suanach mac Shennach, and the *scológ* of Kilcullen and the *bacach* of Benburren: that at one and the same time make some to sleep, and some to weep, and others again to laugh — music sweeter than thy strains I never have heard; thou art in sooth a most melodious rogue!' 'One day I 'm sweet, another I 'm bitter,' replied the Kern."

Caeilte also sang a lay exalting the music of a minstrel of the Tuatha, Fer-tuinne, son of Trogan, and of him we read: "Though saws were being plied where there were women in sharpest pains of childbirth, and brave men that were wounded early in the day, nevertheless would such sleep to the fitful melody that he makes. Yet to the dwelling in which for the time being he actually is he is not minstrel more effectively than to that whole country's inhabitants in general [for all they as well may hear him]" (*Silva Gadelica*, II, 111; cf. p. 246).

For soporific music in the ballads, see further Child, I, 55; II, 137, 139 ff., 511 f.; IV, 18 f.; V, 220, 293 — also Hyde-Dottin, *Sgéalvidhe Gaedhealach*, pp. 188–189. Daghda the Druid, performs in the hall of his enemies the three

feats which give distinction to a harper; makes the women cry tears, the women and youth burst into laughter, and the entire host fall asleep. O'Curry, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, III, 214; cf. D'Arbois de Jubainville, *Cours de la Litt. Celtique*, II, 190 f. See also *Revue Celtique*, XII, 81, 109; XV, 488.

Page 76. **Silva Gadelica*, II, 187 f., 190 f., 213.

Page 76. †See *Percy Folio MS.*, I, 246 ff., Child, *Ballads*, II, 136 ff., 511 f. In *The Palace of Honour* (ed. Small, I, 21, vv. 15–16) Douglas writes Glaskeriane. Glasgerion has been identified with Y Bardd Glas Keraint, Keraint the Blue Bard. " Kirion the Pale was indeed an effective harper, if the accounts given of him may be credited. Not more so was his compatriot Cadwallo, 'that hushed the stormy main,' or Modred, whose magic song made huge Plenlimmon bow his cloud-topp'd head " (*P.F. MS.*, I, 246). Note the " silly blind harper " of Lochmaben, who fooled the English king (Child, IV, 16).

Page 77. **The Sunset of Old Tales:* " Orpheus and Oisin." — The Irish tale, " The Three Daughters of King O'Hara," reverses the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice. (See Curtin, *Myths and Folklore of Ireland*, Boston, 1890.) Bugge thought the Scandinavian ballad *Harpens Kraft* was derived from *Sir Orfeo* (Child, V, 211).

CHAPTER V

Page 79. *" Irish tradition," says Mr. Quiggin, " preserves the names of a number of antiquarian poets of prehistoric or early medieval times, such as Amergin, one of the Milesian band of invaders, Moran Roigne, son of Ugaine Mór, Adna and his successor Feirceirtne, Torna (c. 400), tutor to Niall Nóigiallach, Dallán Forgaill, Senchán Torpéist, and Cennfaelad (d. 678), but the poems attributed to these writers are of much later date." (*Encycl. Brit.*, s.v. Celt: Irish Literature).

Of Aneurin's noted epic *Gododin*, a would-be account of the British defeat by the Saxons at Cattraeth (603), Mr. Gruffydd writes: "It seems probable that the original nucleus of the poem was handed down orally, and recited or sung by the bards and minstrels at the courts of different noblemen. It thus became the common stock-in-trade of the Welsh rhapsodist, and in time the bards, using it as a kind of framework, added to it pieces of their own composition formed on the original model, especially when the heroes named happened to be the traditional forefathers of their patrons, and occasionally introduced the names of new heroes and new places as it suited their purpose; and all this seems to have been done in early times. Older fragments dealing too with the legendary heroes of the Welsh were afterwards incorporated with the poem, and some of these fragments undoubtedly preserve the orthographical and grammatical forms of the 9th century. So that, on the whole, it seems as fruitless to look for a definite record of historical events in this poem as it would be to do so in the Homeric poems, but like them, though it cannot any longer be regarded as a correct and definite account of a particular battle or war, it still stands to this day the epic of the warriors of its own nation" (*Encycl. Brit.*, s.v. Celt: Welsh Literature).

As to Llywarch Hen, see Nutt, *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition*, IV, xxxiv f.

Page 79. †"It is convenient to follow the long-established custom of speaking of certain Welsh poems as Taliessin's, and of a manuscript of the thirteenth century in which they are contained as the Book of Taliessin. These poems represent a school of Welsh bardism, but we know in reality nothing about their authorship; and the personality of Taliessin is as mythic as that of Gwydion and Merlin, both of whom have also been treated as the authors of Welsh verse." — Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 543–544; cf. Lady Guest's *Mabinogion*, III, 321–326, 356–361; Stephens, *Lit. of the Cymry*, pp. 167 ff., 270 ff. Taliessin becomes a denizen of the wilderness in the *Vita Merlini*, v. 1457 ff.

"Both Taliessin and Myrddin," to quote again from Mr. Gruffydd, "the one as the mythological chief of all British bards and the other as a great magician, seem preëminently suited to attract a great deal of later Welsh poetry under their aegis. . . . It was but natural that all the pseudo-prophetic poems, written of course after the events which they foretold, should be attributed to the chief among seers, Myrddin, or, as his name is written in English, Merlin; so that all the poems accredited to him, with the exception perhaps of the *Avallenau*, were not written before the 12th century." *Encycl. Brit.*, s.v. Celt; Welsh Literature. On the date of the poems attributed to Merlin, see F. Lot, *Annales de Bretagne*, XV, 505 ff. Merlin, even in mediaeval romance, was pictured as a notorious shape-shifter. In a striking episode in the *Roman de Merlin*, he appears at court as a dwarf.

Page 80. *Dubthach, chief *fili* of Ireland in the time of Patrick, is represented as the saint's constant companion.

Page 80. †His story, from the *Book of the Dun Cow* (therefore of the beginning of the eleventh century at the latest), was edited by K. Meyer, *Voyage of Bran*, II, 285 ff.; cf. Nutt, *Ibid.*, II, 76 ff. It was used as a sort of preface to the *Lebor Gabala;* cf. D'Arbois, *Cycle Mythologique*, pp. 47 ff.

Page 81. *This book is, strictly speaking, the work of Michael O'Clery, one of the compilers of the *Annals of the Four Masters*, but it is founded upon older documents. See O' Curry, *Lectures*, p. 168; Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, I, 172; Nutt, *Voyage*, II, 80; D'Arbois, II, ch. 4.

Page 81. †See O'Curry, *MS. Materials*, App., cxxviii; Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 205, 210; Squire, *Mythology*, pp. 201 f. Cormac, son of Art, son of Conn, was a poet. See the story of the *Gilla Decair* (*Silva Gadelica*, II, 292).

Page 82. *I, 189. On Conn's chronicle, see above p. 23.

Page 83. *See Eleanor Hull, *The Cuchullin Saga*, London, 1898, pp. 109 ff.; cf. Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 259. Odin tells similarly of his own exploits in *Hávamál*.

Page 84. *Hull, pp. 293 f.

Page 85. *They also, of course, were the only ones who could tell of the otherworld.

Page 85. †*Trans. Ossianic Society*, IV, 271, 273. For Ossian as a blind old man, see J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, Paisley and London, 1890, II, 113 ff.; cf. Patrick Kennedy, *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*, London, 1866, pp. 240 ff.

Page 86. **Report of the Committee of the Highland Society*, 1805, p. 16.

Page 86. †Of the Gaelic poems in the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*, nine are directly attributed to Ossian, two to Fergus, one to Caeilte, and one to Conall Cearnach, while some are ascribed to otherwise unknown bards.

Page 87. **Silva Gadelica*, II, 101 ff., 107 ff.

Page 87. †Giraldus Cambrensis (*Topography of Ireland*, Dist. III, ch. 2) makes "Roanus," i.e., Caeilte mac Ronan, survive and tell the tale of Partholan to St. Patrick.

Page 88. *Nutt notes the likeness between Forgoll's name and that of Dallán Forgaill, Columba's disciple and panegyrist (*Voyage of Bran*, II, 82 note).

Page 88. †On satire in Celtic stories, see F. N. Robinson, *Satirists and Enchanters in Early Irish Literature* (published in *Studies in the History of Religions*, presented to Crawford Howell Toy, N.Y., 1912; the Morgan story is discussed on p. 119).

To his instances should perhaps be added the case of Sir Dinadan in Malory, Bk. X, E. K. Chambers says (*Mediaeval Stage*, I, 45): "Nor were [minstrels] less in request for satire than for eulogy. The English speaking minstrels, in particular, were responsible for many songs of derision of unpopular causes and personalities; and we nced not doubt that 'the lay that Sir Dinadan made by King Mark, which

was the worst lay that ever harper sang with harp or with any other instrument,' must have had its precise counterpart in actual life." But was not Dinadan's lay of the old Celtic type, an echo of a mythical tale, not an image of actual life in England ?

Page 89. **Silva Gadelica*, II, 378 ff.

Page 89. †In a long topographical poem in the *Dindsenchas* he is made to recount the exploits of Goll mac Morna, and describe how the latter put a host to sleep by playing the harp. Cf. O'Curry, *Lectures*, p. 302; Nutt-MacInnes, p. 406.

Page 90. **Silva Gadelica*, II, 167. On Fionn's birth and rearing, see Nutt, *Folklore Record*, IV, 1–36.

Page 90. †*Silva Gadelica*, II, 99–101; cf. p. 166.

Page 90. ‡*Silva Gadelica*, II, 166.

Page 90. §Notes to D. MacInnes, *Folk and Hero Tales*, London, 1890, p. 407.

Page 91. *Introduction to J. G. Campbell's *The Fians* London, 1891, pp. xxxiv f. Nutt insisted on the difference between the prose and ballad forms of the Ossianic legend, the one Christian, the other pagan in spirit. See *Voyage of Bran.*, I, 218, note.

Page 92. *With Odin Rhŷs equated Gwydion of Welsh fable, who also was reputed to have gained the gift of poesy by penetrating to the otherworld (see below, p. 247). Gwydion, according to the Mabinogi of *Math*, was " the best story-teller in the world," and we are informed how more than once he assumed the form of a wandering bard to gain access to courts. " Gwydion," says Rhŷs, " was the cleverest person ever heard of by Taliessin, who reckoned himself no poor judge in such a matter; and, as described by Lucian under the name of Ogmios, he was the god of eloquence and the wisdom thereto appertaining " (*Hibbert Lectures*, p. 285).

Page 93. **Odyssey*, VIII, 62, 487; XIII, 27.

CHAPTER VI

Page 97. *Gow mac Morn was one-eyed, like Odin. In the *Boyish Exploits of Finn Mac Cumhaill* (preserved in a manuscript of the Psalter of Cashel, dated 1453), where Finn's *enfances* are represented in a manner not unlike those of Wallace, we are told how, in the battle of Cnucha for the Fian leadership in Erin, Aedh son of Morna fought with Luichet and lost one eye, " so that from this the name of Goll [Gow, Luscus] adhered to him from that time forth." (See *Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the Year 1856*, pp. 281 ff.) But the explanation of one-eyed folk (Odin among them) goes deeper than that.

The epithet " Loðrok " of the Danish warrior Ragnar, which means " shaggy-breeched," was interpreted as " lothly brook " (*odiosus rivus, ruisel hainus*); cf. Geoffrey of Wells, *Garland of St. Edmund*, ed. Lord Francis Hervey, London, 1907, p. 156; Denis Pyramus, *Life of St. Edmund*, ll. 1887 f.

Page 97. †Ed. M'Lauchlan and Skene, 1862. A new transcription of the Dean's MS. has since been made by Alex. Cameron, and published by Alex. Macbain and John Kennedy, *Reliquiae Celticae*, I, Inverness, 1892.

The name of Malory's hero, Gareth, seems to be derived from the Welsh form of the name, where the -dh is pronounced -th. Goll (Gow) mac Morn was frequently called *Goll na Beumanan*, i.e., Goll of Blows. May not this epithet *Beuman* be the origin of the epithet which is ascribed to Gareth, *Beaumains*, the French romancer interpreting the Celtic epithet as " Fair Hands," though blows, not fair hands, are his chief characteristic ? (See J. G. Campbell, *The Fians*, p. 49.) He is called " Goll of the terrible deeds " in *Silva Gadelica*, II, 174. Cf. " Garry, than whom no bloodier foe "; " Garry (Garryth) of the powerful arm " (*Book of the Dean of Lismore*, p. 9, Gaelic on p. 6 — from a poem by Ossian). Garry was the name of more than one of the Fenians.

Page 98. **Silva Gadelica*, II, 132–136.

Page 98. †Daire (Doire) is also written Dyryth.

Page 99. *"Find and the Phantoms," ed. and trans. Whitley Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, VII, 289 ff. Mr. John Fleming offered corrections of the translation, in the *Academy*, Aug. 24, 1889. Cf. Dr. Ansta's version in the *Dublin University Magazine*, XXXIX, 325 ff., which is entitled "The Rath of Badamar; also the notice by O'Curry, in his *Lectures on the MS. Materials of Irish History*, p. 305. Cf. also J. F. Campbell, *Revue Celtique*, I, 193 ff.

Page 99. †*Wallace*, Bk. IV, ll. 181 ff. It is to be noted that Gask Hall is in Perth, and that Wallace's companions are Irish. Cf. Wandering Willie's Tale in *Redgauntlet*.

Page 99. ‡*Grímnismál*, st. 48.

Page 100. *Snorri's *Edda* (*Gylfaginning*, § xx), trans. Brodeur, pp. 33 ff.

Page 100. †See Brand's *Popular Antiquities*, ed. Hazlitt, London, 1870, III, 295 f. William Geddie (*A Bibliography of Middle Scots Poets*, S.T.S., 1912, p. 151) quotes as a reference to our poet (!) the following — from "Pennecuik, The Merry Wives of Musleburgh, at their meeting together, to welcome Meg Dickson after her loup from the ladder, p. 17: 'It 's war nor playing a Blin *Harrie*.'"

Compare the following from Lyndsay (*Three Estates*, ed. Laing, II, 244, quoted Jameson, s.v. 'Belly-blind'):

> War I ane king . . .
> I sould richt sone mak reformatioun;
> Failyeand thairof your grace sould richt sone finde
> That Preists sall leid yow lyke any *bellie blinde*.

Page 100. ‡See Child, *Ballads*, I, 67. "The Billie Blin presents himself in at least four Scottish ballads: 'Gil Brenton,' C; 'Willie's Lady'; one version of 'Young Beichan'; two of 'The Knight and Shepherd's Daughter'; and also in the English ballad of 'King Arthur and the King of Cornwall,' here under the slightly disfigured name of Burlow Beanie."

Page 101. *Bk. I. ll. 227 ff. This fictitious feature of Wallace's career was long kept in memory and reappears in the late Scottish ballads of *Gude Wallace*, a circumstance which led Professor Child to remark: "The portions of Blind Harry's poem out of which these ballads were made were perhaps themselves composed from older ballads, and the restitution of the lyrical form may have given us something not altogether unlike what was sung in the fifteenth, or even the fourteenth, century." Regarding which, we may say that if this disguising of a hero in woman's clothes was embodied in an early ballad, and it most likely was, we need not conclude that that ballad concerned Wallace. Though there certainly were popular tales about Wallace's exploits, as Wyntoun attests, Blind Harry's book is so obviously a concoction of all sorts of unauthentic material that he may have been the first to attach this device to the famous warrior. As Professor Child points out (*Ballads*, III, 266, 191), the disguise as a woman occurs in other outlaw stories, e.g., *Eustace le Moine* (ed. Michel, p. 43) and *Robin Hood and the Bishop*.

Page 102. *"Distaff," an Old Norse word. It is not necessary to believe that the humor of the passage is the poet's own.

Page 102. †Bk. IV, ll. 763 ff.

Page 102. ‡*Grímnismál*, st. 47, and in the passage from Snorri cited above, p. 100 note.* Child says (I, 67): "Originally and properly, perhaps, only the bad member of this mythical pair is blind; but it would not be at all strange that later tradition, which confuses and degrades so much in the old mythology, should transfer blindness to the good-natured one, and give rise to the anomalous Billie Blind."

Page 102. §Child, *Ballads*, I, 279; cf. the *dvergar* of Old Norse mythology.

Page 103. *The Dutchman Gisbertus Voetius, in his *De Miraculis*, speaks "De illis quos nostrates appellant *beeldwit et blinde belien*, a quibus nocturna visa videri atque ex iis arcana revelari putant" (quoted Child).

Page 103. †See Brand, *Popular Antiquities* (1870), III, 54. The book appeared in 1777. Bugge, who connects the old Norse Loki with Lucifer, notes: "The second of Loki's brothers is named Helblindi. In like manner the devil, in the Middle Ages, is often called blind, and the Anglo-Saxons used many names for the devil that begin with helle-" (Bugge-Schofield, *Home of the Eddic Poems*, p. lv). Helblindi, one may add, was a name that Odin says he bore (*Grimnismál*, st. 46). The plant usually called "the devil's snuffbox" is also called "blindman's ball," or "blindman's bellows."

Bishop Corbet, in an Elegy on Bishop Ravis (quoted Century Dictionary), wrote of

> Ould Harry-ruffians, bankerupts, southsayers,
> And youth whose cousenage is as old as theirs.

Harry-ruffians, with their fellow soothsayers, were probably related to Blind Harry and Billie Blin. (Was the "ruffian" originally Ruffinus, the devil?) On cosenage, see Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. — To the same class belonged the popular figures Harry Gad and Jack Harry. Twice (in *Ware the Hauke* and *Magnificence*) Skelton refers to Jacke Harys, or Jacke Hare. Lydgate wrote a poem entitled *Jack Hare*, whom he pictures as "a froward knave," "a sluggard," "his sleeves right thredbare," "with louring face nodding and slumbering." — John (or Jock) Blunt is the designation of a clownish fellow mentioned by Dunbar in *The Tua Marrit Wemen and the Wedo*, ll. 142 f., and by Polwart in the *Flyting*, ii. 784, 789: "vyld, widdered, misordered, confedered with fiends" (N.B.) — "Blak Belly" and "Bawsy Brown" are mentioned as devilish sprites in *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*, l. 80. There were various forms of their names, like Belly Brassy (Laing, *Select Remains*. p. 218), etc. Cf. Scott's *Minstrelsy*, 1803, II, 32 n. Together with "Ballybrass and Belly," as names of those at a noisy assembly, the author of *The Tale of Colkelbie Sow* (Laing, pp. 248 f.) introduces "the Haryhurlere husty." — Dunbar also mentions Jonet the Widow

(riding on a broom, with a wonderful company of witches) along with Simon Magus, Mahoun, and Merlin, in *The Birth of Antichrist*, ll. 34–35 (Schipper, p. 218).

Page 103. ‡There were various otherworld figures of suspicious omen who were conceived by the popular imagination as both naked and hairy. See, for example, what Keightley tells (pp. 402 ff.) of the Phynnoderee ("Hairy One") of Manx tradition, who was indignant when clothes were left him as a reward for services. Compare the ballad of *The Brownie of Blednoch* by William Nicholson, the Galloway poet. Ben Jonson, in his *Sad Shepherd*, introduces a hairy sprite called Puck-hairy. It may be that some thought Blind Harry was originally Blind Hairy. See Jamieson's Dictionary, s.v. *Blind Harie.*

Page 103. §See Dr. Cranstoun's note on this passage, pp. 324 f.

Page 104. *Child, *Ballads*, I, 361. Cf. Chambers, *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*, 1870, pp. 89 ff.; *The Complaynt of Scotland*, ed. Murray, p. 63; Motherwell, *The Ettin o' Sillarwood.*

Page 104. †Laing, *Select Remains*, pp. 271 ff. Cf. Scott's *Minstrelsy*, 1803, II, 198. The story is a curious transformation of an old bit of faery lore, with a blending of classical story. The Carling, because she refused the advances of one Blasour, was forced to defend herself as best she could against the king of faery, who came with a host of elves to besiege her. Finally, she turned herself into a sow and went "gruntlyng over the Greek Sea," married Mahoun and became Queen of Jews! (One might conjecture that Mahoun in the beginning was Maelgwyn and his city Caer Seon, Segontium, which, in the story where Maelgwyn makes a crowd of poets and musicians swim to it from the Son of Don's land, Mona, was interpreted as Zion; see Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 271–273). "All this langour," the poet explains, in the same mood as the author of *King Berdok*, "for luve befoirtymis fell"! He would probably have alleged no better authority for his story than that offered by the writer of

the similarly roistering tale of *Colkelbie Sow* (ed. Laing, *Select Remains*, pp. 234 ff.), set in Ayrshire, which then enjoyed extravagant popularity — his great-granddame, the beldame, old Gurgunnald.

> Scho knew the lyfe of many faderis ald,
> Notable gestis of peax and weiris in storye.

The Colkelbie boar, it may be said, had a varied experience, for he is said to have fought valiantly with Wade and Meleager, and was hunted by Diana, the King of Sidon, and Eglamour of Artois.

Page 105. *VII, 61 ff. He may have derived the episode from tradition. See Bower, *Scotichronicon*, II, 170 (Neilson, p. 101).

Page 106. *Dr. Moir passes this scene by almost in silence. He does not discuss its authenticity, but attributes it to Blair. Concerning "this Master John" in the text, he says (p. 416): "This use of *this* would seem to indicate that Harry had Blair's work before him"! But on Blair, see Chapter IX.

Page 106. See Rupert Taylor, *The Political Prophecy in England*, New York, 1911, pp. 58 ff.

Page 107. *(*Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, Letter V. On Thomas the Rhymer, see Letter IV.) The passage reminds one of Plato's words in the *Republic* (II, 364, trans. Jowett): "Mendicant prophets go to rich men's doors and persuade them that they have a power committed to them by the gods of making an atonement for a man's own or his ancestor's sins by sacrifices or charms, with rejoicings or feasts; and they promise to harm an enemy, whether just or unjust at a small cost; with magic arts and incantations, binding heaven, as they say, to execute their will. And the poets are the authorities to whom they appeal." They cite Hesiod and Homer, "and they produce a host of books written by Musaeus and Orpheus, who were children of the Moon and the Muses — that is what they say — according to which they perform their ritual."

Page 111. *On Tuesday, April 27, 1490, the only entries are: "to the cobill man of Cambuskynnell quhen the King past owre" (5 sh.); "at the Kingis commande, to Blinde Hary" (18 sh.); "to Qwariour, ane of the gunnaris, at the Kingis commande" (18 sh.); "to Mussche, currour, to pass with a letter of the Kingis for the Lorde Glammis" (5 sh.) — I, 133.

On New Year's Day, 1490 [–1], the only entries are: "to the trumpatis, v vnicornis" (£4.10); "to Quhyg and Jok trumpat" (18 sh.); "to John of Wardlaw and Wilȝeam myne eme" (36 sh.); "to the portaris" (36 sh.); "to Jame Lam of the Kingis pantre" (36 sh.); "to the isschares of the haw dure" (18 sh.); "to Blind Hary" (18 sh.); — "to Berclaw" (18 sh.); "to Domynico" (9 sh.) — p. 174.

On April 5, 1491, the following entries: "to Johne of Wardlaw and Wilȝeam myne eme" (36 sh.); "to the trumpatis, "iiij vnicornis" (£ 3.12); "to Blind Hary" (18 sh.); "to Bennat" (18 sh.); "til a harper" (18 sh.); "to Sallirman, to by him claythis" (9 sh.) — p. 176. (Bennat was a fiddler; see p. 326).

On September 14, 1491, sole entry: "to Blind Hary, at the Kingis command" (5 sh.) — p. 181.

On January 2, 1491 [–2], the following entries: "to Schir Thomas Galbretht, Jok Goldsmyth and Crafurd, for the singyn of a ballat to the King in the mornyng, iij vnicornis" (£2.14); "to Blind Hary" (9 sh.); "to Martyn M'Bretne, clareschaw" (10 sh.); "til ane oder Ersche clareschaw" (5 sh.); "to Scot the currour, to pass with letteres to arest the schippis at the west sey" (10 sh.) — p. 184.

Page 112. **Ballads*, III, 55 f., III, 21 f. In the year 1417, according to Stowe, "one, *by his counterfeit name called Fryer Tucke*, with many other malefactors, committed many robberies in the counties of Surrey and Sussex, whereupon the king sent out his writs for their apprehension" (*Ballads*, III, 41).

Page 112. †Sir David Lyndsay (in his *Testament and Complaynt of the Papyngo*) mentions Quintayn Schaw by his first name only:

Quintyn, Merser, Rowle, Henderson, Hay and Holland
Thocht thay be deid, thair libellis bene levand.

Page 112. ‡*Accounts*, I, 99, 270, 339.

Page 113. *Rendered '*quondam progenitori nostro et nobis in scripturis literarum nostrarum Sanctissimo patri nostro Pape et diversis regibus, principibus et magnatibus ultra regnum nostrum missis, et expensas per eundem in pergamino, papiro, cera rubea et alba, ac alios sumptus in dictis literis et scripturis ultramarinis factis, emptis et sustentis et pro toto tempore vite sue faciendis et sustentandis*' (No. 269; cited Dickson, *Accounts*, I, p. c note).

Page 113. †On Stobo, see Laing, II, 361, 427–429; Small's Dunbar, pp. cclxvii f. Stobo is mentioned by Kennedy, *Flyting*, st. 12; "gar Stobo for thy life protest"; cf. Schipper, p. 156; Mackay's note (I, cclxvii f.). The last payment of his pension is entered in 1504–05, when he is spoken of as deceased before July 13, 1505 (*Exchequer Rolls*, no. 330).

Page 114. *On the whole matter, see Introduction to *Eger and Grine*, in the *Percy Folio MS.*, ed. Hales and Furnivall, I, 343, 352. It is interesting to note that "Grime," the name of the otherworld warrior in the oldest version of the story, appears as "Graham" in a later version, perhaps in memory of the famous friendship of Wallace and Graham (*Ibid.*, I, 345). On such nicknames as that borne by Archibald Bell-the-Cat, see Veitch, *History and Poetry of the Scottish Border*, new ed., 1893, I, 260. A picturesque figure of the sixteenth century, William Burnet, was known as "the Hoolet (Howlat, owl) of Barns," because he was supposed to see as well in the night as in the daylight. His friend William Veitch was known as "the Deil of Dawyck," getting his sobriquet because it was believed that no one ever rose up from under his sword-strokes (*Ibid.*, II, 44 f.).

Page 114. †*Hist. Eccles.*, Bologna, 1627, p. 496. See Montgomery's Poems, ed. S.T.S., Introd., p. xiv.

Page 114. ‡There has been some discussion as to whether Jack Raker, cited as a "maker" by Skelton, Nicholas

Udall, and others, was a real person. Pretty certainly Dyce was right in thinking (in opposition to Collier) that "he was an imaginary person, whose name has become proverbial." (See Skelton's Works, ed. Dyce, I, 123; II, 186.)

Martin Parker wrote a ballad entitled *The Poet's Blind Man's Bough* [*Buff*], or *Have among you my Blind Harpers*, London, 1641. The sub-title was proverbial, and used in many Elizabethan ballads, as my friend Dr. Hyder E. Rollins has shown me by much evidence. Harpers were even then proverbially blind.

CHAPTER VII

Page 120. *Bk. VII, ch. 1–2; trans. Giles, *Old English Chronicles.*

Page 120. †VII, 9, 17.

Page 121. *XI, 1443 ff.; cf. VIII, 645 ff.

Page 121. †It is hard to see how Dr. Mackay could have written in the *Dictionary of National Biography:* "The poet apologizes for departing on one point from Blair, and the reader is sensible throughout that the poet is translating rather than producing original matter." — "The poet speaks in his own person at the close, and may have dictated it to the transcriber." — His blindness "makes his poem a wonderful feat of memory"!

Page 122. *XI, 1431–32. Henry Morley (*English Writers*, VI, 250) commenting on a "homely touch" in one of the poet's stories (pretty certainly borrowed!), calls it "characteristic of Blind Harry's way of telling his adventures *as a rural man* to rustic audiences."

Page 123. **Op. cit.*, pp. 45 f.

Page 123. †*Franklin's Tale*, Prologue, ll. 44 ff. Dr. Giles says (*Cambridge History*, II, 108): "The very defects of Harry's poem commended it to the vulgar. It professes to be the work of a *burel* man, one without special equipment as a scholar, though it is clear that Harry could at least read Latin."

Page 123. ‡Printed in the *Bannatyne Miscellany*, II, 161 ff., also recently along with *The Kingis Quair*, ed. Alex. Lawson, London, 1910, pp. 104 ff. (St. Andrews University Publication No. VIII). The poem is preserved in a Selden MS., with the *Troilus* and some minor pieces of Chaucer, as well as *The Kingis Quair*. The MS. seems to have belonged to some branch of the family of the Sinclairs, Earls of Caithness.

Miss Gray, in her edition of *Lancelot of the Laik* (S.T.S., 1912, p. xviii), agrees with Prof. Skeat (*Scottish Historical Review*, Oct. 1910) that these two poems are by the same author. On p. xx she repeats her suggestion, first advanced in the *Scottish Historical Review*, April, 1911, that the author was Vidas Achinlek, a Scotsman resident in France, Steward in the household of Louis XII, not James Auchinleck, Chantor of Dornoch; " but," she adds, " both claims are purely speculative."

The author of the *Lancelot*, likewises poses as modest;

> Quhen that thai here my febil negligens,
> That empit is, and bare of eloquens,
> Of discressioune, and ek of Retoryk;
> The metire and the cuning both elyk
> So fere discording frome perfecciounе;
> Quhilk I submyt to the correcioune
> Of yaim the quhich that is discret and wyss,
> And enterit is of loue in the seruice. (179 ff.)

His work was to " endite " with " lusty terms "; he appeals to Virgil, master of " eloquence " and " rhetoric " (329).

Page 124. *Ll. 185 ff.; cf. 310 ff.: " Suppose of wit I empty be and bare." The author of a sixteenth-century poem on Flodden Field, all in prating of Parnassus and appealing to the Muses, talks of his " simple, rude and rugged rhyme " (ed. Weber, 1808, l. 18).

Page 124. †Ll. 245 ff. The *Troilus* stanza is also used in the *Quare*, 317–463. Blind Harry has thirteen stanzas of eight lines each (VI, 1–104) of the type used in the Monk's tale:

also a nine-line stanza (II, 171–179) with the scheme aab aab abb, nearly like that in the *Compleynt of Mars*.

Page 125. *II, 216 ff.

Page 125. †XI, 1109 ff.

Page 127. *IV, 336 ff.

Page 127. †Skeat, *Mod. Lang. Quarterly*, Nov. 1897; Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 42–46. The list of Chaucerian borrowings might be considerably increased.

Page 127. ‡VII, 175 ff. Cf. *Knight's Tale*, A 2450–69; *Troilus*, II, 99, 105.

Page 127. § IV, 735–736; cf. *Troilus*, I, 15 ff. For "Venus werkes," cf. the Wife of Bath's Prologue, ll. 707–708.

Page 128. *V, 579 ff.; VI, 17 ff.

Page 128. †Ll. 1951 ff.; cf. *Destruction of Troy*, ll. 13263 ff.

Page 129. *V, 217 ff. Dr. Moir writes (p. 400) apropos of the passage: "This apparently indicates that Harry was not a member of some religious house. So in XI, 1461, he calls himself a *burel* man. Yet he shows himself by no means an uneducated man; and he may have been connected with some monastery without being in holy orders. Indeed at the time he lived he could hardly have possessed the education he did unless he had been brought up in some religious house." This hardly needs comment; but we may note that Irving long ago suggested (*Lives of the Scottish Poets*, 1804, I, 340 ff.) that the Wallace-poet may have been a friar. "The canon law," he explained, "did not exclude a blind man from holy orders," and "the supposition that Henry was at once a minstrel and a friar implies nothing absurd."

Page 129. †IV, 186.

Page 129. ‡V, 111 ff.

Page 129. § Ll. 489 ff.

Page 130. *Ll. 329 ff.

Page 130. †VIII, 961 ff.

Page 130. ‡II, 351–359.

Page 131. *See below, pp. 170 ff.

Page 131. †The *Wallace* seems, indeed, to have begun with a Latin invocation:

> Ihesu saluator, tu sis michi auxiliator
> Ad finem dignum perduc librum atque benignum.

These lines are usually omitted altogether or regarded merely as the work of the scribe. But Brown points out (p. 35) that they are an integral part of the poem, and compares them with the opening of the *Geste of Troy:*

> Now, God, of þi grace graunt me þi helpe
> And wysshe me with wyt þis werke for to end!

The following lines in both poems, referring to the deeds of noble ancestors which men were apt to "overslide," are closely parallel.

Page 133. *Cf. Kittredge, *Chaucer's Lollius* (*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, XXVIII, 55 ff.).

Page 134. *VII, 890 ff.

Page 134. †VII, 221.

Page 134. ‡Compare what is said of Auchinleck (V, 469 ff., VI, 337). One wonders whether the fact that the Charteris family (one of whom was to print the *Wallace*) claimed ancestry from a Knight Longaville, had anything to do with the introduction of a personage of that name into the poem (XI, 1146 ff.). Neilson (p. 95) thinks the figure was borrowed from Barbour. "Thus, by a species of transmigration of souls, Bruce's Knight of France, with his praises of Bruce's worthiness, passes into an earlier existence as the comrade of Wallace and extoller of his prowess" (*Bruce*, IX, 400; *Wallace*, IX, 232). Neilson (p. 95) gives other instances — Ramsay, Seton, Douglas, Comyn, Boyd — of men transferred from followers of Bruce to followers of Wallace, and we do not hear of any one protesting on that

account. Even Bishop Sinclair is transferred to Wallace and made one of his chief counsellors, though Barbour says Bruce called Sinclair "his own bishop." Blind Harry represents Wallace as appointing Sinclair to the bishopric, though in fact he was only elected in 1309. — The family of Fitz Hugh could not have been gratified by what Blind Harry wrote of Fehew. The poet evidently hated Fitz Hugh because he was a leader of the English army that invaded Scotland in his own time, and gave him a despicable ancestor. — We may note that the *Howlat* is really a Douglas poem, because of the relation of Holland to the family.

Page 135. *Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 69 ff.

Page 137. *VI, 341 ff. Mr. Neilson (p. 107) points out the likeness of this account of the abuse of heralds with the episode in *Quentin Durward* (ch. 33), which was connected with the actual circumstance that a false herald was sent to Edward IV by Louis XI in 1475. See Hall's Chronicle, pp. 311 ff. On heralds, see Sir Gilbert Hay's *Buke of the Law of Armys*, Part IV, ch. 142 (ed. J. H. Stevenson, I, 281).

Page 138. *VIII, 1685 ff.

Page 139. *VIII, 1494 ff.

Page 140. *VII, 397 ff. The status of the Knights of Rhodes was a matter of debate at the time, but obviously not among "ruryk folk."

Page 140. †*Buke of the Howlat* (ed. Amours, *Scottish Alliterative Poems*) ll. 577 ff.

Page 140. ‡Spenser later, by way of reminiscence, wrote concerning Florimel's wedding:

> To tell the glorie of the feast that day,
> The goodly service, the devicefull sights,
> The bridegromes state, the brides most rich aray,
> The pride of ladies, and the worth of knights,
> The royall banquets, and the rare delights,
> Were worke fit for an herauld, not for me.
>
> (*Faery Queen*, V, iii, 3.)

Chaucer has a good deal to say about heralds in the Knight's Tale, and shortens the description of the feast of Theseus with the remark:

> Of al this make I now no mencioun,
> But al th' effect, that thinketh me the beste.

Page 141. **Queene Elizabethes Achademy*, E.E.T.S., E.S., No. VIII, 1869, pp. 93 ff.; ll. 196 ff., 245 ff. The editor thinks the poem is only a copy.

Page 142. *Printed, Edinburgh, 1821.

Page 142. †Lyndsay, singularly like Blind Harry, wrote also with mock modesty. At the opening of his *Dreme*, we read;

> With ornate termis thocht I can nocht express
> This sempyll mater, for laik of eloquence.

Again, in the prologue to his *Papyngo:*

> Quharefor, because myne mater bene so rude
> Of sentence, and of rethorike denude
> To rurall folke myne dyting bene directit.

And in the envoy:

> Beseikand yow excuse myne ignorance
> And rude indyte, quhilk is nocht tyll avance.
> And to the quair, I geve commandiment,
> Mak no repair quhair poetis bene present.

Sir Walter Scott introduces the "Herald-bard," Lyon King at Arms, into *Marmion* (Canto IV) and makes him tell a tale.

Page 142. ‡Pp. 16 ff., 19. "As the story is related the exploits of the hero range over a very wide territory comprehending nearly the whole lowlands of Scotland, a considerable tract of country within the Highland line, the northern counties of England, and several provinces of France. The poet's acquaintance with these several areas is remarkable, though unequal. Of the wilds of Lennox and Argyll, for example, he writes like one who knows the country more by report than from actual experience. Not so, however, of the lowlands of Scotland. There he is evidently on very familiar ground. He conducts his hero from one place to another by

highways or byways just as occasion requires. He unerringly strikes the way in all his journeyings. He writes like one whose eyes are very wide open indeed." "The place names are fitted into the long metrical narrative without the slightest appearance of difficulty. They occur always in strict geographical sequence. Frequently indeed we can discern minute touches intended doubtless to aggrandise the description, and quite unimportant for the story proper, which certainly indicate uncommon knowledge on the part of the narrator."

Page 143. *See *Accounts* (ed. Thomas Dickson, Edinburgh, 1877) from 1489 to 1497, I, 122, 124, 128, 129, 176, 178, 179, 183, 340, 368. Cf. "Widderspune that tald talis to the King" (I, 307; cf. I, 326, 330).

Page 143. †Langland writes (*Piers Plowman*, B Text, XIV, 24 f.:

> Shall none heraude ne harpoure have a fairere garnement
> Than Haukyn the actyf man and thou do by my techyng.

Activa-vita calls himself a minstrel, an apprentice of Piers Plowman. He was about as good a pattern of that figure (as described by Wycliffe: "Whanne men travailen for worldli goodis, and kepen hem in rightwisnesse") as Chaucer's Pardoner of what he should have been. On various types of minstrelsy, see *Piers Plowman*, C. Text, XVI, 194 ff. See Skeat's notes, II, 199 f.

Irving (I, 346, note) quotes a passage in the heraldic collection of Sir David Lyndsay: "It is to understand yat na menstrale sall weir his lord or princis armes as ane herrald dois," etc., and adds (p. 347): "Mr. Pinkerton, without any precise reference to ancient authorities, has affirmed that in 1474 minstrels were classed with knights and heralds and authorized to wear silken apparel."

Page 144. *Ed. F. Michel, London, 1883.

Page 144. †Ed. E. Charrière, Paris, 1839.

Page 145. *See Schofield, *Chivalry in English Literature*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1915, pp. 30 ff.

Page 145. †IV, 184, VII, 736.

Page 146. *Here his opinions are much like those of Chaucer. Cf. the latter's discussion of poverty at the end of the Wife of Bath's Tale, 321 ff. Cf. also the opinions of Burns, who was devoted to Blind Harry.

Page 146. †*Percy Folio MS.*, ed. Hales and Furnivall, I, 233.

Page 146. ‡Various conjectures have been made as to where the poet was born. Mr. Brown says: "I am not aware that it has ever been remarked that his domicile appears to have been in or near Linlithgow. At any rate the royal largesse was made to him on every occasion at Linlithgow when the young monarch came to reside at the Palace there." Mr. Neilson, on the other hand, gives reasons for thinking that "the poet had a peculiar interest in the town of Perth, and also in its institutions." But what about Ayr? From the numerous mentions of that place in his poem, one might surmise that he was born or lived there. He apparently knew what he was talking about when he wrote: "This use has been oft in the town of Ayr." Perhaps, like Wallace ever, "right sore he longed the town of Ayr to see." Mr. Æneas Mackay remarks that the dialect of the poem is that of Lothian, and adds: "He [Blind Harry] probably belonged to Lothian, for otherwise he would not have been known to Major in his infancy, which was passed in the neighborhood of North Berwick." But Major does not say that in his infancy he knew Blind Harry, but only that the poem on Wallace was written in his infancy. Until we know more about the author, we need not worry about his birthplace.

CHAPTER VIII

Page 147. **Essays and Studies*, I, 109 ff.

Page 149. *"It appears from a letter written in February, 1485–6, by Thomas Betanson to Sir Robert Plumpton, that prophesying was in that year made felony" (Brand's *Popular Antiquities*, ed. Hazlitt, III, 56).

Page 150. **The Whole Prophecie of Scotland, England, and some part of France, and Denmark, Prophesied bee meruellous Merling, Beid, Bertlington, Thomas Rymour, Waldhaue, Eltraine, Banester, and Sibbilla, all according in one, Containing many strange and meruelous things.* Printed by Robert Waldegraue, Printer to the King's most Excellent Maiestie, *Anno* 1603. Reprinted for the Bannatyne Club, 1833.

The book contains also a prophecy attributed to Gildas; and "The Scotts Prophecie in Latine." The *Whole Prophesie* was reprinted with additions by Andro Hart in 1615. Here the Scot's Prophecy in Latin is accompanied by an English translation.

The practice seems to have spread to Iceland. Keightley notes (p. 161) that "there was a book of prophecies called the *Kruckspá*, or Prophecy of Kruck, a man who is said to have lived in the 15th century. It treated of the change of religion and other matters said to have been revealed to him by the Dwarfs. Johannæus says it was forged by Brynjulf Svenonius in or about the year 1660." (See *Finni Johannæi Hist. Eccles. Islandiae*, Copenhagen, 1774, II, 370, n.) Keightley misinterprets Jónsson, to the prejudice of a man worthy of all honor — Bishop Brynjolf Sveinsson, discoverer of the Elder Edda. What Jónsson really says is that the prophecy was written by an encomiast of the Bishop ("ab inepto quodam Brynjulfi Svenonis, viri laude meliore digni, praecone").

Page 151. **The Political Prophecy in England*, New York, 1911. For a book on contemporary political prophecy, see Father Herbert Thurston, *The War and the Prophets* (Burns & Oates), 1915.

Page 151. †The author of the *Complaynt of Scotland*, in 1529, found it necessary to warn his countrymen against "diuerse prophane prophesies of merlyne, and vther ald corruptit vaticinaris, the quhilkis hes affermit in there rusty ryme, that scotland and ingland sal be vnder ane prince," to which "the inglismen gifis ferme credit." (Quoted J. A. H. Murray, *Thomas of Erceldoune*, p. xxx.)

Page 152. *Bk. II, ch. 4. On incubi and succubi, see Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. According to Boece, these wicked spirits were exceedingly troublesome in Scotland in 1480.

Page 152. †Bk. II, ch. 5. He discusses prophecies of Merlin in Bk. IV, ch. 8; Bk. IV, ch. 19; Bk. V, ch. 7. He mentions another "old prophecy" on p. 273, gives a vision of Banister on p. 223, and repeats without objection the following story (p. 204): "Our chroniclers here tell a story of how an English hermit was witness of several souls taking their flight from purgatory to heaven, and how one of these was Wallace; and as he marvelled much how this could be, seeing that Wallace had shed man's blood, he got for answer that it was in a just cause, and when fighting for his country's freedom, that he had slain others." This story Major found in Blind Harry's poem (XI, 1238 ff.).

Page 153. *Bk. IV, ch. XII; trans. Constable, pp. 190–191.

Page 153. †See C. K. Sharpe, *Historical Account of Witchcraft in Scotland*, 1884, pp. 30–34; cf. Tytler, *History of Scotland*, ed. 1887, II, 214.

Page 154. *Wyntoun (Bk. VIII, ch. 31), who makes Thomas predict the battle of Kylblene in 1335, remarks:

> He sayd it in his prophecy
> Bot how he wyst it, wes ferly.

Page 154. †See Neilson, *Essays and Studies*, I, pp. 97–98.

Page 154. ‡Bk. II, l. 86. Barbour also believed in the vaticinal tapestry made by St. Margaret; see Taylor, p. 72.

Page 154. §Bk. I, ll. 351–352. Lord Percy's men were under the influence of prophecies.

> In ilka part thai war gretly agast
> Throw prophesye that thai had herd befor (III, 26–27).

Lord Percy himself remarks in another place:

> Our clerkys sayis he sall ger mony de (V, 508).

Page 154. ‖Bk. II, ll. 346–349. Note Blind Harry's remarks:

> Thomas Rimour in to the Faile was than,
> With the mynystir, quhilk was a worthi man;
> He wsyt offt to that religious place.
> The peple demyt of witt mekill he can;
> And so he told, thocht at thai blis or ban,
> Quhilk hapnyt suth in mony diuers cace. (II, 288 ff.)

Dr. Moir remarks innocently (p. xxix): "That true Thomas lived at this time is very probable, but that he uttered such a prophecy about a comparatively unknown young man of eighteen can only be credited upon the supposition that he was a veritable prophet."

Page 155. *Bk. XI, l. 959.

Page 155. †P. W. Joyce (*Social History of Ireland*, II, 528) writes: "The ancient Irish had a universal implicit belief in the prophecies of their native saints. On the eve of a battle one of the leaders — in order to encourage his men — was pretty sure to bring up and read for the army some prophecy, generally by the patron saint of the tribe, referring to the coming battle, in which victory was predicted for his side. . . . Before the Battle of the Yellow Ford, where Hugh O'Neill inflicted a disastrous defeat on the English in 1598, he caused his hereditary *ollave* O'Clery to read aloud for his army a prophecy of St. Columkille, made a thousand years before, predicting victory for the Irish army." Joyce points out that most or all of these prophecies were forgeries.

Page 156. **Fenian Poems*, ed. John O'Daly (*Transactions of the Ossianic Society for 1856*), Dublin, 1859, pp. 17 ff.

Page 158. *"Inimicitias Othinus serit" (Saxo, p. 142, ed. 1644).

Page 158. †*Historia Danica*, Bk. VII (trans. Elton, pp. 279 ff.)

Page 159. *Ed. Madden, ll. 17130 ff. See Grundtvig, I, 274; Child, I, 67.

Page 159. †II, 5.

Page 159. ‡VII, 235–237.

Page 160. *Eyre-Todd, *Early Scottish Poetry*, pp. 181, 187.

Page 161. *Alfred Nutt (*Waifs and Strays*, IV, xxxiv f.) called attention to the remarkable parallels between the utterances placed in the mouth of Oisin and those assigned to the Welsh warrior poet Llywarch Hen, and also to the fact that it is in the ballad, not the prose, forms of the Ossianic legend that the pagan spirit prevails. "The note of scorn and aversion," he writes (*Voyage of Bran*, I, 218), "is not lacking in Irish mythic literature towards the milder, bloodless charms of the new faith, though the grounds upon which this aversion is based appeal more forcibly to us than is the case with the protest of classic or Scandinavian Paganism; but in the Irish mind alone have the two worlds sought to kiss each other, nowhere else has the Christian monk heard the wailing cry of the birds of Faery as they await the advent of the Apostle." And again (I, 235): "The stage of Fenian romance, represented by the *Agallamh na Senorach*, in which Caoilte, last of the old hero race, is a dutiful follower of Patrick, has passed away from the popular consciousness, whilst this still retains the vivid outline of the defiant pagan, Oisin, reviling the Christian saint, and lamenting the pride and glory of his youth. In vain did some ninth or tenth century poet picture the bird-flock of the Land of Promise churning the waters milk-white in their passionate appeal to the national saint; the people of Ireland are mindful to this very day of songs and warblings older than the cleric's bell, and wholly unaffected by its tones."

Page 161. †*Dean of Lismore's Book*, p. 85.

Page 161. ‡*William Sharp. A Memoir Compiled by his Wife*, London, 1910, pp. 227–228.

Page 162. **Ibid.*, p. 231.

Page 163. **Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*, ll. 109 ff. Skelton, who had much in common with Dunbar, sneers at Cardinal Wolsey in much the same manner, in his *Why Come Ye Not to Court:*

God saue hys noble grace
And graunt him a place
Endlesse to dwel
With the deuyll of hell
For and he were there
We nede neuer feere
Of the fendys blake
For I vndertake
He wolde so brag and crake
That he wolde than make
The deuyls to quake.

Page 164. *" Scottish Influence in British Literature " — *Essays Biographical and Critical*, Cambridge, 1856, p. 408.

Page 164. †*Characteristics of English Poets*, 2d ed., 1885 (first ed., 1874), p. 69.

Page 165. **Scottish Review*, XXII, 177.

Page 166. *I, 7 (pp. 40–41).

Page 167. *IV, 19 (p. 223).

Page 167. †*Chronicle*, Bk. ix, ch. 20 (ed. Laing, III, 72).

Page 168. **Bannatyne Miscellany*, III, 175. Charteris's address to the reader is found in his second edition (1594), but may be assumed to have stood in the first (1570), the only known copy of which is imperfect, lacking title-page and preliminary matter.

CHAPTER IX

Page 170. *Bk. XI, ll. 1410 ff. As early, it appears, as 1620, a printer of the *Wallace* tells the reader that the poem was " written in Latin by Master John Blair, Chaplain to Wallace, and turned into Scots metre by one called Blind Hary, in the days of King James the Fourth." " The Rev. John Blair " has become a fixed figure in Scottish annals.

Page 170. †This seems, at first, like a strange attribute. Dr. Moir suggests (Glossary, s.v. *sauage*): " Perhaps it is for O. F. *sçavant*, with termination from O. S. *sage*, wise,

learned." There may be a corruption of the text; all one needs for the sense is " sage," and this is all there is in some early prints (" als right sage "); but the author was not very careful about his adjectives; he applies " cruel " frequently to Wallace and the Scots (e.g., VII, 998), and he speaks of Longaweill " that ay was full sawage " (IX, 457). Of the five thousand followers of Sir John Norton (who " was known worthy and wight,") we read that they were " welle garnest and sawage " (VIII, 813).

Page 171. *Mr. J. T. T. Brown (pp. 50 ff.) has made it probable that the poet referred to a " Thomas Gray " as another authority contemporary with Wallace because the father of the author of the *Scalacronica* (written ca. 1362) took part in the Wallace struggles. Both he and his son, the chronicler, were called Thomas Gray, Mr. Brown further conjectures (though with less plausibility) that he was called " parson of Liberton " because he may have held " some fortalice like Oggs Castle or Whyte Castle in Liberton parish."

Page 171. †V, 534 ff.; XI, 1424 f.

Page 171. ‡IX, 1233 ff.; IX, 1539; cf. VI, 315–316.

Page 171. §" In Wallace buk brewyt it with the layff " (IX, 1943–1944). See Brown, pp. 50–51, who justly applies to him, after considering this situation, the brocard *falsum in uno falsum in omnibus.*

Wallace, we may note, was described by Fordun (at A.D. 1297) as " thin in the flanks," an attribute attributed by Dante to Michael Scot.

Page 171. ||X, 793, 893–898. In the following passage, Dr. Moir reads " I " instead of " Schir," but the latter, the reading in the 1570 edition, is evidently correct:

> Bot maister Blayr spak nothing off himsell,
> In deid off armes quhat awentur he fell.
> Schir Thomas Gray, than preyst to Wallace,
> Put in the buk how than hapnyt this cace
> At Blayr was in, [and] mony worthi deid,
> Off quhilk him selff had no plesance to reid.

Page 172. *See the summary of opinion by Brown, pp. 47 ff. Cf. David Laing (*Poems of William Dunbar*, Edinburgh, 1834, I, 44): "It is somewhat singular that his own work should have usually been regarded in the light of an original composition, when it is evident from the concluding address, that it was in a great measure a translation from the Latin." Sir Walter Scott seems to have been an exception. "It is a great pity," he says (in the *Tales of a Grandfather*), "we do not know exactly the history of this brave man [Wallace]; for at the time when he lived, every one was so busy fighting, that there was no person to write down the history of what took place; and afterwards, when there was more leisure for composition, the truths that were collected were greatly mingled with falsehood." Sir Walter knew too much of ancient ballad worthies and heroic champions to swallow Blind Harry whole.

Page 172. †See Veitch, *Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry*, I, 173 ff.: "John Blair, the chaplain of Wallace, was little likely in the midst of the hurry of incidents, to pause on the aspects of outward nature. He would be sufficiently occupied in noting events as they occurred. In all probability the descriptions of nature are the wandering minstrel's own" (p. 176).

Page 172. ‡Dr. Craigie writes of the Latin book (p. 182): "That this work did exist we do not doubt for a moment, and if it could possibly be recovered, the manifold confusions in the poem might be explained more simply than they can with our present imperfect knowledge of the period. A man who could say 'I haiff had blayme to say the suthfastness' (7, 917) was not likely to be utterly reckless in his use of his authority." *Scottish Review*, XXII.

Irving (*Lives*, I, 340 ff.) discusses the possibility of his being an ecclesiastic at considerable length, showing that "the canon law did not exclude a blind man from holy orders," but he does not reach any definite conclusion.

The devout editor of the *Wallace* surmises that Blair had still another function. Apropos of the hero's amour with

the maid of Lanark, and the question in the author's mind as to whether she was Wallace's wife or not, Dr. Moir notes (p. 406): "Blair, as the bosom friend of Wallace, may have married them privately," adding: "One would like to consider her his wife; and the whole passage is so elevated and touching, that it could hardly be inspired by an illicit amour." Dr. Moir might well read the scenes between Troilus and Cressida, to get light on this episode. Blind Harry says that Marian Bradfute was married to Wallace: "Myn auctor sais, scho was his rychtwys wyff" (VI, 48). His author was really here Wyntoun, who says just the opposite, that she was Wallace's "lemman."

Page 172. §*Scottish History and Literature*, Glasgow, 1884, p. 60.

Page 172. || *Scottish Vernacular Literature*, pp. 66–67.

Page 173. *Introduction, pp. XI–XII; cf. Garnett, I, 292.

Page 173. †Andrew Lang (*History of Scotland*, 1900, I, 180) takes Blair's Latin book seriously.

Page 173. ‡See Neilson, *Essays and Studies*, I, p. 101. Mr Neilson, however, thinks that further search may yet show that Master Blair "had some kind of basis for his alleged existence."

Page 173. §See Brown, pp. 48 ff.

Page 174. *"Chaucer's Lollius" in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, XXVIII (1917), 49 f., 55.

Page 175. *Blind Harry asserts the same of himself; see above, p. 127.

Page 177. *Bk. I, ch. XVII (Sommer's edition, p. 62). Blaise appears in the *Suite de Merlin* (ed. Gaston Paris and Jacob Ulrich, S.A.T.F., 1886, I, 30 ff., 44 ff., 47 f., 61, 85, 90, 115, 133, 232). In II, 139 we read of his being at Camelot: "Blaises demouroit encore a Camalaoth, et si tost que Merlins estoit avoec lui, il li disoit les aventures qui avenoient ou roiaume de Logres [et] grant partie des choses qui sont a avenir, si que cil ot son livre bien ordené et auques

mené a fin anchois que Merlins se partesist de la grant Bretaigne." It is here explained (I, 48) that "Merlins le clama maistre pour chou que il avoit esté maistres sa mere."

Page 178. **Roman de Merlin*, ed. Sommer, pp. 17 f., 26 f.; cf. also pp. 35, 41, 48, 52, 58, 73, 78, 128, 190, 191, 220 f., 273, 312 f., 322, 337, 401, 452, 435, 452, 483, etc. Master Blair is represented as a boon companion of Wallace.

To se his heyle his comfort was the mor
As thai full oft togyddyr war before (V, 547–548).

And Maister Blair to Wallace cam bot baid,
With that gud lord that nobill cher thaim maid,
Wallace send Blayr, in [to] his preistis weid,
To warn the west quhar freyndys had gret dreid
Master Jhon Blair was blith off that semble (IX, 1235 ff.).

For other references to Blair, see VIII, 1197–1198, IX, 1539, 1943, X, 793 ff.

Page 178. †*Roman*, p. 128, Compare: "Si sen ala Merlins a Blaise son maistre en Norhomberlande qui moult grant ioie li fist quant il le uit *car moult lama de grant amor*, & il li enquist & demanda comment il auoit puis fait & il li conte toutes les choses en si comme vous aues oi el conte puis quil se parti de lui & *il le mist tut en escrit & par ce le sauons nous encore*. Et quant Merlins vint a conter de la damoisele quil ama par amor si en pesa moult a Blaise car paor ot quele ne le decheust & quil nen perdist son grant sauoir si len commencha a castoier, & cil li dist les prophesies teles comme eles estoient auenues & des autres qui puis auindrent en la terre ensi comme li contes vous deuisera cha en auant & *Blayse mist tout en escrit ensi comme Merlins li conta*" (p. 273). Master Blaise was the last person Merlin talked with before he finally repaired to Viviane and was imprisoned by her (p. 483).

Page 178. ‡Cf. "Merlins sen ala en Norhomberlande a Blaise por atorner & metre a point toute ceste estoire" (*Roman*, p. 52).

Page 179. **Roman*, pp. 17, 35, 312, 401, notes. "Ensi com Merlins est deuant Maister Blaise & li fait mettre lez auentures en escrit" — is the title of the miniature at the end of the description of Merlin as an "homs sauvage" (p. 312).

Page 179. †Ed. F. J. Furnivall, Rolls Series, I, 288. Merlin's other associates, Tolomer and sire Amytayn (Auntayn ?), are more obscure even than Blair's Thomas Gray.

Page 180. *"Ce scribe imaginaire," says Gaston Paris, "se retrouve naturellement dans le *Perceval* de Robert [de Boron]," and he goes on to show that the Helye to whom the author of the *Suite du Merlin* appeals to translate the *Conte del Brait* (the tale of the last cry of Merlin) from the Latin Book of the Holy Grail, was similarly a fictitious personage, though to him was also attributed the romance of *Tristan*. "Je prie," says the false Robert, "a mon signeur Helye, qui a esté mes compains a armes et en joveneche et en viellece," etc. These words cannot but remind us of the Wallace-poet's statement that his hero and Master Blair had been companions at school. See Introduction to the *Huth Merlin*, S.A.T.F., pp. XIV, XXV ff.

Page 180. †The one name is variously spelt: Blaise, Blayse, Bleise, Bleyse, Blase; the other, Blair, Blayr, Blare.

Page 180. ‡In Italy, in the fifteenth century, to judge from MSS. of Merlin's prophecies written in 1442, his name was transformed into Basil; see Rupert Taylor, *Political Prophecy*, pp. 144, 152.

Page 180. §Pp. 56 ff. Mr. Brown writes: "The chaplain Master John Blair, who received reward from James III for the transcript of Mandeville, was Vicar of Maybole and in all likelihood related to the Blairs of Adamtoun or Ardblare, near neighbours and kinsmen of Wallace of Craigie, chief of the Scottish Wallaces. He witnessed charters granted by Adam Blair, at Adamtoun and Inchinnan, between 1467 and 1490." Cf. Sir Bryss the Blayr in the *Wallace*, VII, 209, note p. 417. — Mandevile's Travels was put into Irish by Fingin O'Mahony in 1475 (Stokes, *Zt. f. celt. Phil.*, II, 1).

Page 181. *"To Mandeville's burlesque account of the obtaining of the Papal *imprimatur*, it will be difficult to find an analogue in English literature other than the lines of the *Wallace* just quoted" (Brown, p. 57). Mr. G. C. Coulton has pointed out that at the time Mandeville wrote, the Pope lived, not at Rome, but at Avignon.

Page 182. *The name occurs in many forms; for this one, see Jessie L. Weston, Romania, XXXIII, 333, 340.

Page 183. **Silva Gadelica*, II, 127; cf. pp. 115, 122, 132, 190. Compare: "'Success and benediction, Caeilte!' said Dermot, grandson of Cerbhall; 'and where are Ireland's sages and her antiquaries? In ollave's diction be these matters written down upon the tabular staves of poets and in records of the learned; to the end that of all the knowledge, the enlightenment, the hill-lore, and of all the doughty deeds of arms which Caeilte and Ossian have communicated to us, each and all may to their own country and to their land take back their share.' Even so it was done" (p. 167).

Page 183. †*Ibid.*, p. 112.

Page 185. **Itin. Kambriae*, I, 5.

CHAPTER X

Page 187. **Bannatyne Miscellany*, Edinburgh, 1855, III, 169 f. See above, p. 168, note.

Page 188. *Bk. IV, ch. 13, 15, trans. Constable, pp. 195, 204 f.

Page 189. **Lives of Scottish Worthies*, London, 1831, I, 132–133.

Page 190. *Tytler certainly knew, for example, that from Blind Harry alone could have been derived most of the following information about Blair, yet at this point he carefully refrains from naming his "authority": "Blair was of like age with Wallace, and the two youths formed a lasting attachment to each other. When he became celebrated, Wal-

lace chose his early friend for his chaplain; and it is a subject of deep regret that a Latin life of his master and patron, which was written by Blair, has, with the exception of a few fragments, been lost or destroyed." Tytler uses constantly "the Minstrel biographer," even when he must have known no probability could attend his story. What elaborate pains he takes, thereby showing his hero's "remorse" on doing a mean thing, to explain Fawdoun's ghost as due to "natural causes"!

Page 191. *Sir David Dalrymple, *Annals of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1776, I, 245–252. Compare his comment on "Blind Harry, whom every historian copies, yet whom no historian but Sir Robert Sibbald, will venture to quote" (p. 281, note).

Page 191. †Pp. xiii, xvii, note.

Page 192. *This view is echoed by Dr. Æneas Mackay in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, who, writing of Major's rejection of Wallace's visit to France, speaks of that as confirmed by subsequent research, and also, writing of 'Henry the Minstrel,' mentions that narrative among certain others, as "corroborated by records or histories discovered or published since it was written." Likewise Andrew Lang (*History of Scotland*, 1900, I, 180) remarks: "Later discoveries have corroborated by documents some of Harry's assertions"; but he remains vague. Further (p. 189): "This confirms, so far, Blind Harry's tale of Wallace's journey to France, which has other confirmation in papers found upon the hero when finally taken." How far?

Page 193. **History*, I, 358 ff.

Page 193. †*Cyclopedia of Eng. Lit.*, Boston, 1860, I, 29, Chambers remarked naïvely: "That the author meant only to state real facts must be concluded alike from the simple unaffectedness of the narration and from the rarity of deliberate imposture, in comparison with credulity, as a fault of literary men of the period."

Page 193. ‡See J. H. Burton, *Hist. of Scotland*, 1873, II, 183.

Page 194. **Essays and Studies*, I, 112.

Page 195. *The words of a poem by Glareanus written in 1515.

Page 195. †W. A. B. Coolidge in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, where sufficient bibliography is given.

Page 196. **Journey to the Western Islands*, 1775, *Works*, 1787, X, 462–464.

Page 196. †*Scotish Songs*, 1794, I, lxi–lxvi. Pinkerton recanted in his *Ancient Scotish Poems*, 1786. See S. B. Hustvedt, *Ballad Criticism in Scandinavia and Gt. Britain*. Monograph of the American Scandinavian Foundation, New York, 1916, p. 257. It may be noted that Burns was influenced by *Hardyknute*, even as by the *Wallace*. See his *Works*, ed. Currie, London, 1903, I, 278 ff.

Page 196. ‡Sir David Wemyss was one of the Scottish ambassadors sent to Norway to conduct the youthful queen to her new dominion. It was at Sir John Wemyss' request that Wyntoun wrote his *Oryginale Cronykil*, before 1424.

Page 197. **The Legendary and Myth-making Process in Histories of the American Revolution* (Proceedings of the Amer. Philosophical Soc., Vol. 51, 1912, pp. 65 f.) Dr. Fisher quotes among other passages the following description of Morgan at the battle of Saratoga: " The face of Morgan was like the full moon in a stormy night when she looks down red and fiery on the raging deep, amidst foundering wrecks and cries of drowning seamen; while his voice like thunder on the hills was heard loud shouting his cavalry to the charge."

Page 199. *Knickerbocker was " particularly anxious that his work should be noted for its authenticity; which, indeed, is the very life and soul of history." " Like Xenophon," he says, " I have maintained the utmost impartiality, and the strictest adherence to truth throughout my history." " The chief merit on which I value myself, and found my hopes for future regard, is that faithful veracity with which I have compiled this invaluable little work; carefully winnowing away the chaff of hypothesis and discarding the

tares of fable, which are too apt to spring up and choke the seeds of truth or wholesome knowledge."

We are reminded of Master John Blair when we read what he says of Master Robert Juet of Limehouse, in England, "chief mate and favorite companion" of Commodore Henrik Hudson. "To this universal genius," wrote Knickerbocker, "are we indebted for many particulars concerning this voyage; of which he wrote a history, at the request of the commodore, who had an unconquerable aversion to writing himself, from having received so many floggings about it when at school. To supply the deficiencies of Master Juet's journal, which is written with true log-book brevity, I have availed myself of divers family traditions, handed down from my great-great-grandfather, who accompanied the expedition in the capacity of cabin-boy."

Page 201. *R. Morison, Junior, Perth, 1790, I, 19–20.

CHAPTER XI

Page 203. *Camden even called Chaucer "our English Homer" (*Remaines*, ed. 1657, p. 313).

Page 204. *Geoffrey of Monmouth (trans. Giles, p. 104) makes Homer testify that Tours was built by Brutus. In another place he says: "At this time Samuel the prophet governed in Judaea, Sylvius Aeneas was yet living, and Homer was esteemed a famous orator and poet" (p. 111; cf. pp. 112, 113).

Page 205. **Historia Ecclesiastica*, No. 662, ed. Bannatyne Club, 1829, II, 349: "Henricus quidam, a nativitate caecus, rara tamen ingenii felicitate, Homerus alter, patriam linguam supra aetatem suam ditavit. Scripsit operosum et grande opus versu vernaculo."

Page 205. †*A Collection of Old Ballads*, London, 1723–25, I, p. iii; cf. S. B. Hustvedt, *Ballad Criticism*, pp. 98, 100.

Page 205. ‡Pp. 116, 103.

Page 206. *I, 352.

Page 206. †*Specimens of the Early English Poets*, 5th edition, London, 1845, I, 284.

Page 207. **English Writers*, VI, 244. The indebtedness of the *Wallace* to oral tradition has been much emphasized. — Robert Wood (*Essay on Homer*, London, 1824, p. 57) remarks: "As to the difficulty of conceiving how Homer could acquire, retain, and communicate, all he knew, without the aid of letters, it is, I own, very striking. And yet, I think, it will not appear insurmountable, if, upon comparing the fidelity of oral tradition, and the powers of memory, with the poet's knowledge, we find the two first much greater, and the latter much less, than we are apt to imagine."

Page 207. †Æneas Mackay, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Page 207. ‡The words of Eyre-Todd, *Early Scottish Literature*, p. 187.

Page 207. §II, 109–110.

Page 208. *Keble in his *Praelectiones* (*Lectures on Poetry, 1832–1841*, trans. E. K. Francis, Oxford, 1912, I, 279 ff.) argued for the traditional belief that Homer was blind "before the last years of his old age, while he was still strong enough to travel through cities and isles, singing his wonted lays." He admitted that on first impression it seems impossible that "Homer was already stricken in sight when he wrote the two great poems we possess and enjoy today." — "For how can we associate with a blind poet those many word-pictures, so varied in kind, form, colour, movement, and gesture — all so richly and truthfully painted?" These, however, he maintained, were fruits of the memory, and held that there was a difference on this point between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. "I decidedly think the whole position is best explained by supposing that the *Iliad* was written while Homer's sight remained to him, and the *Odyssey*, or most of it at least, when he had lost it."

Page 208. †*English Literature, an Illustrated Record*, London, 1903, I, 292. It is not strange that all blind minstrels should suggest Homer. An example from Ireland in recent times attests the irresistible reaction. Mr. Yeats, in his account of "The Last Gleeman," Michael Moran (†1846), who is said to have gone blind a fortnight after his birth, relates (*Celtic Twilight*, p. 74): "Once an officious peeler arrested him as a vagabond, but was triumphantly routed amid the laughter of the court, when Moran reminded his worship of the precedent set by Homer, who was also, he declared, a poet, and a blind man, and a beggarman." The transition is easy from "like Homer" in some respects to like Homer in others, or all.

Page 208. ‡Plato (*Republic*, X, 600) attests the tradition that Homer was greatly neglected when he was alive. He was evidently allowed, the philosopher thought, to go about as a rhapsode because men in his day did not esteem him as a teacher. Learned critics, from Major down, have persistently treated the Wallace-poet patronizingly. Until recently no one divined the real purpose of his poem.

Page 209. *See Pauly-Wissowa, XVI, 2199.

Page 209. †Ephorus thought the name Ὅμηρος simply meant "the blind one"; the Ionians called the blind δμηροι because they needed people to lead them about. The poet was first called Melesigenes, and later Homer after he became blind. See Pseudo-Plutarch, I, 2.

Page 209. ‡Wood (*op. cit.*, pp. 168–169) compares Homer's case in this respect with that of Ossian: "If then, with Josephus, we suppose that Homer left no written copy of his works, the account we find of them in ancient writers becomes more probable. It is generally supposed that Lycurgus brought them from Ionia into Greece, where they were known before only by scraps and detached pieces. Diogenes Laertius attributed the merit of this performance to Solon; Cicero gives it to Pisistratus; and Plato to Hipparchus; and they may possibly have been all concerned

in it. But there would have been no occasion for each of these persons to have sought so diligently for the parts of these poems, and to have arranged them so carefully, if there had been a complete copy. If, therefore, the Spartan Lawgiver, and the other personages committed to writing, and introduced into Greece, what had been before only sung by the rhapsodists of Ionia, just as some curious fragments of ancient poetry have been lately collected in the northern parts of this island, their reduction to order in Greece was a work of taste and judgment; and those great names which we have mentioned might claim the same merit in regard to Homer, that the ingenious editor of Fingal is entitled to from Ossian."

Page 209. §Bk. I, ll. 355 ff.; cf. Moir's edition, p. 388.

Page 211. *For these and other details see Pauly-Wissowa; VIII (16), 2190 f., 2198 ff.

Page 213. *See Nutt, *Voyage*, II, 200; Magnus Maclean, *Lit. of the Celts*, p. 175. Shades of O'Curry rest in peace!

Page 213. †Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, I, 276.

Page 214. *According to Snorri, Thrudheim was Thrace, Baldr (Beldeg) ruled over Westphalia; Sif was the Sibyl; etc.

Page 214. †Odin engaged in various contests of the same sort.

Page 214. ‡*Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, I, 260 f., 262; *Grimnismál*, 44; *Lokasenna*, 11–18; *Sigrdrífumál*, 16.

Page 215. *Cf. the *Skaldskaparmál*, § 10; see below, pp. 247 ff.

Page 215. †See Bugge, *Bidrag til den ældste Skaldedigtnings Historie*, Christiania, 1894; F. Jónsson, *Den Oldnorske og Oldislandske Literatur Historie*, I, 417 ff. Once admit the conception of a minstrel, and of course he has to be imagined going about from place to place. There was such a tradition of Celtic mythological poets. See Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 324 ff., following O'Curry, *MS. Materials*, p. 265.

Page 216. *Snorri's words remind us strikingly of those of Plutarch at the beginning of his *Life of Theseus:* " I desire that the fabulous material I deal in may be subservient to my endeavours, and, being moulded by reason, may accept the form of history, and, when it obstinately declines probability and will not blend appropriately with what is credible I shall pray my readers may be indulgent and receive with kindness the fables of antiquity."

Snorri emphasizes the great age of his men of lore. It has always been an easy step from old to blind. See the account of the blind old prophet of Moster in the large *Saga of Olaf Tryggvason* (trans. Sephton, pp. 399 f.).

Page 216. †*Primitive Culture*, I, 400 f. See his remarks on eponymous ancestors in Greece and elsewhere.

Page 217. **Republic*, II, 382, trans. Jowett.

Page 218. *The *Rigspula*, a poem showing marked Celtic influence, even in the title. Cf. the Mothers in *Faust*.

Page 219. *It should be noted that Woden was also placed at the head of race-genealogies. In one manuscript of Nennius (trans. Giles, pp. 412 ff.) he begins the lists of the kings of Bernicia, East Anglia, the Mercians, the Deiri — " Woden begat," etc.

Page 219. †Scholars have reluctantly given up belief in the sixth-century fabulist of this name, now recognizing that " some of the fables attributed to him are drawn from Egyptian sources older by 800 years than the famous dwarf who is supposed to have invented them." But why repeat that he was represented as deformed " perhaps to indicate his nearer approach to the animals and his peculiar sympathy with their habits " ?

Page 222. *" An examination of both the Gaelic and British legendary romances shows," a recent writer has said, under embellishing details added by later hands, an inner core of primeval thought which brings them into line with the similar ideas of other races in the earliest stage of culture. Their ' local colour ' may be that of their last ' editor,'

but their 'plots' are pre-mediæval, pre-Christian, prehistoric. The characters of early Gaelic legend belong to the same stamp of imagination that created Olympian and Titan, Æsir and Jötun."

" " Roughly speaking, one may compare [the civilization of the Celts] with the civilization of the Greeks, as described by Homer. Both peoples were in the tribal and pastoral stage of culture, in which the chiefs are the great cattle-owners round whom their less wealthy fellows gather. Both wear much the same attire, use the same kind of weapons, and fight in the same manner — from the war-chariot, a vehicle already obsolete even in Ireland by the first century of the Christian era. Battles are fought single-handed between chiefs, the ill-armed common people contributing little to their result, and less to their history. Such chiefs are said to be divinely descended — sons, even, of the immortal gods. Their tremendous feats are sung by the bards, who, like the Homeric poets, were privileged persons, inferior only to the war-lord. Ancient Greek and ancient Celt had very much the same conceptions of life, both as regards this world and the next." See Squire, *Mythology of the British Islands*, pp. 15, 25–26; cf. D'Arbois, *La Civilisation des Celtes et celle de l'Épopée Homérique* (*Cours de la Litt. Celt.*, Vol. VI).

For analogies between the Northern heroic literature and the Homeric, see W. P. Ker, *Epic and Romance*, 1897, pp. 9 ff.

Page 223. *Homer sometimes refers to the Muse, sometimes to the Muses.

Page 225. *Compare Prometheus, the omniscient seer who taught the art of prophecy to men, and was chained by Zeus for acting contrary to his will.

Page 226. *2 Kings VI, 18; Genesis XIX, 11; Acts IX, 8, XIII, 11.

Page 226. †Matthew XII, 22; Mark VIII, 23; John IX, 6–7; Matthew XX, 30–34; Mark, X, 46–52.

Page 227. *John IX, 2–5.

Page 227. †Exodus IV, 10 ff.

Page 227. ‡*Phaedrus*, 243; trans. Jowett, I (1871), 57. "Die Dublette zu Stesichoros ist vervollständigt in vit. 6 Sittl. 6: Helena lässt H. erblinden, weil er die Epen nicht verbrennen will (umgekehrt Isocr. Helena, 64–65; Hel. erscheint H. und trägt ihm auf zu dichten)" (Pauly-Wissowa, 2201).

Page 228. *VII, 647 ff.

Page 228. †Pauly-Wissowa, 2201.

Page 228. ‡See Ed. Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition*, 2d ed. London, 1759, p. 40.

Page 228. §See Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 211.

Page 229. *See Nutt, *Voyage*, I, 213 ff.; *Rev. Celt.*, XV, 315; *Bodley Dinnsenchas*, No. 36.

Page 229. †*The Prose Edda*, trans. Brodeur, xv, p. 27. This story was probably only attached to Odin to explain why he was one-eyed, the real reason for that situation being more primitive than that. "Odin's single eye," says Tylor (*Primitive Culture*, I, 351) "seems certainly to be the sun in heaven." Whether or no this be the case, it should be observed that there are many one-eyed folk in primitive myth, from Polyphemus down. The Cyclopes, with whom he was connected, were reputed to be of the sons of Uranus and Ge, and belonged to the Titans. At first the Cyclopes were regarded as giant herdsmen (cf. the one-eyed being of that sort in *Yvain*). But in later Greek tradition they were represented as the assistants of Hephaestus, who make arms and ornaments for gods and heroes, like the Northern dwarfs. The architects so-called were supposed to be a race of men who derived their name from a king Cyclops and lived in Thrace. (It may be noted that Snorri identified Thrudheim with Thrace and represents Thor as fostered there.) We are reminded of the race of demons at the command of Merlin, who were set to build a brazen wall round Caermarthen, as told by Spenser in the *Faery Queen* (III,

3, 10). In Celtic story, the one-eyed Gow MacMorn is said to have partially lost his sight in combat with Luichet (see prologue to the *Boyish Exploits of Finn*). King Echaid mac Luchtai is said to have been one-eyed because he gave the other to the poet Aidherne (see Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 326–327).

Page 229. ‡Cf. *Hávamál* (st. 110):

Máls at þylja þular stokki á:
Urþar brunni at
sák ok þagþak, sák ok hugþak,
hlyddak á Hóva mǫl.

Page 231. *Mr. H. Munro Chadwick says, apropos of the story of Wayland (*Völundarkviða*): "There can be no doubt that in the Heroic Age — and indeed in much earlier times — princes were especially anxious to obtain slaves, whether foreigners or not, who were skilled in metallurgy. And it is by no means incredible that such slaves were sometimes lamed in order to prevent any attempt at escape — although, quite apart from this explanation, smith's work may be regarded as a vocation natural to the lame man, just as minstrelsy to the blind" (*The Heroic Age*, Cambridge, 1912, p. 134).

Page 232. *In the *Life of St. Liudger* we have a story of a blind Frisian minstrel, named Bernlef, who is said to have been "greatly loved by his neighbors because of his geniality and his skill in reciting to the accompaniment of the harp stories of the deeds of the ancients and the wars of kings." *Vita S. Liudgeri*, II, 1 (*Mon. Germ. Scriptores*, II, p. 412). See Chadwick, p. 80. It is well to recall that, according to convention, ancient bards almost invariably sing of the ancients, though in the light of contemporary events, and to instruct or inspire their descendants.

Page 232. †Obviously, I do not agree with the attitude of Mr. Walter Leaf, in his recent book *Homer and History*, London, 1915, pp. 25 ff. "The fact is," he says, "that the human race does not make men out of gods; but it is always very

busy making gods out of men. . . . Until the contrary is proved, then, or at least made probable, we are bound, when we find a character at one time human, at another time divine, to assume that the human element is the original, the divine superadded to it later." Snorri humanized Odin after the author of the *Chanson de Roland* heroicized Charlemagne. Gawain and Perceval were humanized at the same time that Godefroy de Bouillon and Richard Coeur de Lion were heroicized. Were Robin Hood and Hereward the same sort of outlaws? Were Nectanebus and Virgil the same sort of magicians? Arthur and Napoleon are surely not in the same class, any more than William Tell and William Wallace.

Page 233. **Paradise Lost*, Bk. III, ll. 35 ff. Milton is the only *great* poet who can be proved to have been actually blind, and he did not become so until he was about fifty years of age and had by then become a perfect master of style. Marston and his like are in a different class.

Page 234. *See John Walter Good, *Studies in the Milton Tradition*, Univ. of Illinois, Urbana, 1915, pp. 51 ff.; also App. B., pp. 252 ff.

Page 235. **Poems*, 1900. The volume contains *Christ in Hades*, beginning "Keen as a blinded man."

Page 236. **Faust*, 2d Part, V, v., trans. Bayard Taylor.

Page 236. †"Aus pergamenischer Quelle vielleicht"—Pauly-Wissowa. The allegorical explanation of myths was combated by Socrates, Plato and Aristarchus, but still survives.

Page 236. ‡Cf. Walter Pater, *Renaissance, Studies in Art and Poetry*, 1900, p. 37.

Page 236. §*Vindication of Mr. Milton's Paradise Lost*, quoted Good, pp. 253–254; "The bountiful powers above did more than make him amends for their taking away his sight, by so illumining his mind as to enable him most completely to sing of matchless beings, matchless things, before unknown to, and even unthought of by the whole race of men."

Page 237. **Multitude and Solitude*, New York, 1911, p. 170.

CHAPTER XII

Page 239. **Primitive Culture*, I, 273.

Page 242. **M.N.D.*, V, i, 12 ff. I can find no illuminating commentary on this passage, and some discussions of it are truly sad.

In a summary of a paper by A. W. Pollard and J. Dover Wilson, read before The Bibliographical Society on December 16, 1918 (published in the News-Sheet, January, 1919), it is most interestingly suggested that the first six lines of the above quotation, together with the four beginning "Such shaping phantasies," quoted on page 270, that is, those specially dealing with the "poet," were an afterthought on Shakespeare's part, "written as a cramped marginal addition for a revival not very long before the play was printed in 1600." "Read the rest by itself and we find the theme of 'lovers and mad men' developed in Shakespeare's early style."

Page 244. *"Amergin," wrote Alfred Nutt, "chief poet of the race which is to conquer the Tuatha de Danann, the lords of Faery, and Taliessin, chief of the Welsh poets, son of the enemy of the goddess of the cauldron, the Welsh counterpart of the Irish Tuatha De, may be regarded as varying forms of one mythic original. Their pretensions are the same, and have the same basis. Foes of the wizard gods who shift their shape, who are invisible at will, who manifest themselves under different forms, they, too, by might of the magic all-compelling chanted spell, have acquired like powers (*Voyage of Bran*, II, 92).

Page 246. *Nutt, *Mabinogion*, pp. 295 ff. See p. 34, above, and note *.

Page 246. †*Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 549–550; cf. *Book of Taliesin*, Poem xiv, trans. Rhŷs, *Arthurian Legend*, p. 301; see below, pp. 279–281.

Page 247. *Squire's translation, on the basis of previous ones by Stephens, Skene, Nash and Rhŷs (*Mythology*, p. 319).

Page 247. †*Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 282 ff.

Page 247. ‡Cf. *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, I, 70. In the *Lokasenna*, Loki reminds Odin that the latter dealt in magic in his old doings. Odin's shape-shifting and adventurous amours (cf. the *Hávamál*) we ignore when we write of old Norse mythology. In Homer, though Athene is the goddess of wisdom, she can change her shape. Homer too, ignored the baser myths.

Page 248. **Snorri's Edda*, trans. Brodeur, pp. 82 ff. Bragi is the son of Odin as Gwydion is the son of Don.

Page 249. *Cf. the numerous forms Taliessin took in flight from the court of Ceridwen:

> I have fled with vigour, I have fled as a frog,
> I have fled in the semblance of a crow, scarcely finding rest;
> I have fled vehemently, I have fled as a chain. etc.
>
> (Nutt, *Mabinogion*, p. 299.)

Page 249. †See Burns, *The Kirk's Alarm*, stanza 11, for a similar idea (Brodeur).

Page 250. **Revue Celtique*, XV, 315; *Bodley Dinnsenchas*, No. 36; above, p. 229.

Page 250. †See Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 270 ff. Rhŷs points to an identification of Seon with Hercules. Ogmios also was it seems, equated with Hercules, " and according to Lucian's account of him [Ogmios], he was the personification of speech, and all that conduced to make speech a powerful agency."

Page 250. ‡*Revue Celtique*, XV, 457; *Bodley Dinnsenchas*, No. 30.

Page 251. *Cf. Nutt, *Voyage*, I, 213 ff.

Page 251. †As told in the *Book of the Dun Cow*, trans. Crowe, *Journal Kilkenny Arch. Soc.*, 1870–71, 371 ff.; cf. Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 259 ff. In the prologue to Chrétien de Troyes's *Conte del Graal*, we learn how King Amangons and his men carried off the golden cups of faery damsels, and as a result the land of Logres became waste; cf. Rhŷs, *Arthurian Legend*, p. 247.

Page 251. ‡With these Celtic cauldrons Rhŷs compares the holy tripods of the Greek oracles. "All these cases," he remarks, "connecting the sacred vessel or its contents with poetry and inspiration, point possibly back to some primitive drink brewed by the early Aryan, and taken by the medicine-man to produce a state of ecstasy or intoxication" (*Arthurian Legend*, pp. 326–327).

Page 252. **Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 292–298, where references are given. "In Norse poetry the stealing of the precious mead is spiritualized into a story of the origin of poetry and wisdom, and the Welsh tradition makes the cauldron of the Head of Hades a vessel whence the muses and their inspiration ascend; while Vedic literature clings rather to the more original idea of an intoxicating drink, in that it loves to dwęll on Indra's excessive fondness of soma, and on its power to stimulate and strengthen him to fight the powers of darkness."

Page 252. †R.V. IV, 26, 4; see Andrew Lang, *Encyc. Brit.*, under Mythology: "Yehl, the Tlingit god-hero, was a raven or crane when he stole the water (Bancroft, III, 100–102). The prevalence of animals, or of god-animals, in myths of the stealing of water, soma, and fire, is very remarkable." Compare the way Odin turned himself into a serpent and an eagle when stealing Suttungr's mead. Also the case of Taliessin above, pp. 33–34.

Page 252. ‡See *Silva Gadelica*, II, 385 ff.

Page 255. *Trans. Stokes, *Irische Texte*, Leipzig, 1891, III, I, 211–216; cf. Wentz, pp. 340 ff., 427 ff. In the *Gilla Decair*, Dermot is reminded (by Fergus Truelips, Finn's ollave) that he had studied with Manannan in the Land of Promise, had been accurately taught by Angus Oge, the Daghda's son, and was therefore fit for superhuman feats on earth.

Page 257. *See Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 547–548.

Page 257. †London, 1603, p. 57 (error for 73).

Page 259. *On the whole question of rebirth, see Wentz, *The Fairy Faith*, Oxford, 1911, pp. 359 ff.

Page 260. **Meno*, 81, trans. Jowett. I have used Wentz's translation (p. 382) "surpassing in poetical skill" for Jowett's "great in wisdom."

Page 262. *Bacon, in his essay *Of Friendship*, discussing Aristotle's statement, "Whoever is delighted in solitude, is either a wild beast or a god," maintains that "it is most untrue that it [aversion to society] should have any character at all of the divine nature, except it proceed, not out of a pleasure in solitude, but out of a love and desire *to sequester a man's self for a higher conversation:* such as is found to have been falsely and feignedly in some of the heathen; as Epimenides, the Candian; Numa, the Roman; Empedocles, the Sicilian, and Apollonius of Tyana; and truly and really in divers of the ancient hermits and holy fathers of the Church."

Page 262. †It may be noted that the philosophers whom Dante put in limbo, "spoke seldom and with low voices."

Page 262. ‡2 Cor. 12 : 1–4.

Page 263. *Cf. Judges, 6 : 12 ff.; 11 : 29; 13 : 25; 14 : 6, 19; 15 : 14; 1 Kings 17 : 2, 24.

Page 263. †Luke 4: 33–34. Cf.Peter 1: 21: "No prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost."

Page 264. *Luke 4: 14; John 11: 51; 1 John 4: 1.

Page 264. †*Description of Wales*, Bk. I, ch. XVI; cf. his tale of Meilerius, above, p. 57. Major as we have noted, speculated much about the British prophets (see above, pp. 151–153), also Wyntoun in his Chronicle and Kirk in the *Secret Commonwealth*.

Page 265. *V, *Prose* III. According to Geoffrey of Monmouth (VIII, 10), Merlin tells Aurelius that if he (the wizard) should say anything out of wantonness or vanity, the spirit, or demon, which taught him would immediately leave him. (This is repeated in Robert of Gloucester.) Major says (Bk. II, ch. 6): "The extravagant laudation of Arthur by the Britons leads to a partial doubt of the facts of his life.

The stories told about Arthur's vows concerning the Perilous Bed, as well as many other things relative to Arthur and Valvanus [Gawain] and what they say happened in Britain at that time — all these I count as fiction, *unless indeed they were brought about by craft of demons.*"

Page 265. †*Inferno*, xx.

Page 265. ‡See *Keble's Lectures on Poetry*, trans. E. K. Francis, Oxford, 1912, II, 476 note.

Page 265. §*Advancement of Learning*, II, xxii, 13; Essay I.

Page 266. **Song of Angels*, ed. E. G. Gardner, *The Cell of Self-Knowledge*, pp. xxii f., 69.

Page 266. †*Romeo and Juliet*, I, iv, 97 f.

Page 266. ‡*Merry Wives of Windsor*, III, iii, 230.

Page 267. **Primitive Culture*, II, 137–138, 124, 128.

Page 268. *See Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 278–279; cf. p. 99.

Page 269. *Joyce, *Social History of Ireland*, I, 224; see Todd, *Book of Hymns*, p. 90. "In Tahiti," remarked Tylor (II, 134), "it was often noticed that men who in the natural state showed neither ability nor eloquence would in convulsive delirium burst forth into earnest lofty declamation, declaring the will and answers of the gods, and prophesying future events, in well-knit harangues full of the poetic figure and metaphor of the professional orator. But when the fit was over and sober reason returned, the prophet's gifts were gone."

"In a dialogue between Myrddin and his sister Gwenddydd, contained in the Red Book of Hergest, there is a curious reference to ghosts of the mountain who, just like fairies that live in the mountains, steal away men's reason when they *strike* them, — in death which may appear natural, in sickness, or in accident. And after his death — after he has been *taken* by these ghosts of the mountain — Myrddin returns as a ghost and speaks from the grave a prophecy which 'the ghost of the mountain in Aber Carav' told him" (Wentz, p. 330).

Page 269. †Pliny remarks (*Natural History*, xxx, 13): "Today Britain practises the art [of magic] with religious awe and with so many ceremonies that it might seem to have made the art known to the Persians." See Mac Culloch, *Religion of the Ancient Celts*, 1911, pp. 249–250, 293 ff., 300, 311, 325.

Page 269. ‡Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, II, 66; Aristotle, *Problemata*, 30, 1; Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Animi*, 17; *Absalom and Achitophel*, 163–164.

Page 270. *On "The Lover's Malady of Ereos," see J. L. Lowes, *Modern Philology*, XI, 491 ff.

Page 271. *Cuchulinn was also afflicted by battle-frenzy which made him proceed against his enemies with a rage akin to that of the Old Norse berserker; cf. Rhŷs, *Arthurian Legend*, pp. 216–217.

According to some traditions, Heracles, after his return from Hades, was seized with madness — a calamity sent to him by Hera for a feigned reason.

Page 271. †See Malory, Bk. XI, ch. 8 ff., XII, ch. 1 ff.; cf. Wentz, p. 316.

Page 271. ‡See Schofield, *Studies on the Libeaus Desconus.*, pp. 197 ff.

Page 272. *The *Lay of Narcissus* and the *Lay of Aristotle*, show the naturalness with which antique fables could be treated in the style of Breton lays. There were all sorts of lays, but "most they ben of faery." The charm of other world music appears in *Yonec*.

Page 273. *See *As You Like It*, III, iii, 19. Blackwell remarked (*Essay on Homer*, pp. 145 f.): "Fiction and lying are inseparable from poetry. This was the first profession of the Muses, as they told Hesiod one day they appeared to him while he fed his lambs in a vale of Helicon: 'Shepherd, said they,

> 'T is ours false tales to frame, resembling true;
> And ours t' unfold the truth itself to men.

Then they gave him a fair rod, a shoot of verdant laurel, breathed into him a divine song, and made him celebrate things past and things to come."

Page 274. *Plato, *Ion*, 533–535, trans. Jowett. Plato concludes in the *Meno* (p. 99) that not only diviners and prophets and poets, but also statesmen, "may be said to be divine and illumined, being inspired and possessed of God, in which condition they say many grand things, not knowing what they say."

Page 276. **Conjectures on Original Composition*, 2d ed., London, 1759, pp. 26 f., 36 f., 45.

Page 276. †See J. F. Nisbet, *Insanity of Genius*, 1891; Sir Francis Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, new ed. 1892; C. Lombroso, *Man of Genius*, Eng. trans., 1891.

Page 277. *Was it only a fashion of speech that made Byron say of Rousseau, whose work he counted a prelude to the French Revolution:

> From him came
> As from the Pythian's mystic cave of yore,
> Those oracles which set the world in flame?
> (*Childe Harold*, 3, 81.)

Page 278. *Joseph Warton (in the *Enthusiast*) represents Fair Fancy as finding Shakespeare on the banks of the Avon and bearing "the smiling babe" to a close cavern, where she soothed his wondering ears with songs.

> Still the shepherds show
> The sacred place, whence with religious awe
> They hear, returning from the field at eve,
> Strange whisperings of sweet music through the air.

Page 278. †Richard of St. Victor, whom Dante puts among the glowing souls of the great doctors and theologians in the fourth Heaven and describes as "in contemplation more than man," shows in his *De Gratia Contemplationis* how the soul passes upward through various steps of contemplation until "it contemplates what is above reason, and seems to be beside reason, or even contrary to reason." He teaches

that " there are three qualities of contemplation according to its intensity: *mentis dilatio*, an enlargement of the soul's vision without exceeding the bounds of human activity; *mentis sublevatio*, elevation of mind, in which the intellect, divinely illumined, transcends the measure of humanity, and beholds the things above itself, but does not entirely lose self-consciousness; and *mentis alienatio*, or ecstasy, in which all memory of the present leaves the mind, and it passes into a state of divine transfiguration, in which the soul gazes upon truth without any veils of creatures, not in a mirror darkly, but in its pure simplicity " (*The Cell of Self-Knowledge*, ed. Edmund G. Gardner, 1910, p. xiii).

Page 279. **Ars Poetica*, 296.

Page 279. †*Lectures on Poetry*, I, 55 ff.

Page 280. **Tale of Taliessin*, in Nutt's edition of the *Mabinogion*, pp. 306–613; cf. *Voyage*, II, 84 ff.

Page 282. *Latin Epistle to Diodati, Elegy VI.

Page 282. †" To feel of a sudden," says Mr. Stewart, " that there is surely an eternal world behind, or within, the temporal world of particular items, is to experience the κάθαρσις which Poetry — one among other agencies — effects in us."

" The Soul of Poetry is apprehended in its Body at the moment when we awake from the ' Poet's Dream,' and on a sudden see the passing figures and events of his interesting story arrested in their temporal flight, like the ' brede of marble men and maidens ' on the Grecian Urn, and standing still, *sub specie aeternitatis*, as emblems — of what ? — of Eternal Verities, the purport of which we cannot now recall; but we know that they are valid, and are laid up in that other world from which we are newly returned ' (*Myths of Plato*, pp. 388, 385).

Page 283. **Julian and Maddalo*, ll. 544–546.

Page 284. *Preserved in the *Book of Leinster;* ed. and transl. Whitley Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, XXVI, 4 ff.; Eleanor Hull, *The Poem-Book of the Gael*, 1913, pp. 53 ff.

INDEX

INDEX

Abhdaein, 74.
Achaeans, the, 93.
Achilles, 20, 228, 234.
Achinlek, Vidas, 326.
Adam, 82.
Adam Bell, 112.
Adamnan, 80.
Adonis, 93.
Advocates' Library, the, 142.
Aedh, 73, 74, 97.
Aegir, 215, 248, 249.
Aeneas, 257.
Aeschylus, 217.
Aesir, 249 f.
Aesop, 219.
Affiek, *see* Auchinleck.
Aidherne, 353.
Aidoneus, 78.
Ajax, 20.
Alban Gael, the, 162.
Albany, Duke of, 148.
Albion, 216.
Alcinous, 93, 223.
Alemannus, 216.
Alexander the Great, 34.
Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, 119 f.
Alexander, king of Scotland, 21.
Alexander of Paphos, 212.
Alexti, 42.
Alfred, king of England, 80.
Allen, Grant, 161 f.
Allerton Moor, 121.
Allfather, 229.
Amangons, King, 356.
Ambrosius, 264 f.
Amergin, 33, 34, 51, 79, 244.
American Revolution, the, 197.
Amphiaraus, 93, 265.
Amphion, 77.
Amytayn, 179.
Ananias, 225.
Andrew, St., 105, 106, 110.
Anelida and Arcite, 8.
Aneurin, 79.
Anglo-Saxon myth, 91 f.
Angus, son of John, last Lord of the Isles, 293.
Angus mac Oc, 271.
Angus Oge, 357.
Annandale, 149.
Annwyn, 246, 247.
Answer to a Highlandman's Invective, 23.
Antiope, 77.
Antony, Mark, 272.
Aphrodite, 94, 268.
Apocalypse, the, 152, 277.
Apollo, 77, 93, 209, 224, 255, 268.
Apollonius of Tyana, 358.
Araby the Blest, 51.
Arawn, 256.
Arcite, 129 f.
Arden, forest of, 71.
Argyle, Argyll, Argyleshire, 25, 50, 78, 293.
Argonauts, the, 224.
Aridaeus-Thespesius, 261.
Ariel, 43.
Arion, 76.
Aristarchus, 354.

Aristophanes, 209.
Aristotle, 93, 269, 358.
Ark, the, 34.
Arran, 78.
Arthur, King, 20, 28, 32, 46, 69, 70, 71, 73, 108, 119, 159, 177, 178, 184, 185, 186, 231, 271, 354.
Asgard, 214, 249.
Ash of Yggdrasill, the, 229.
Asia, 34, 51, 214.
Athena, 225, 356.
Athens, 39, 243.
Auchinleck, James, 123.
Augustine, St. (d. 430), 265.
Augustine, St. (d. 604), 16, 299.
Aurelius, 358.
Austria, 195.
Avalon, 70, 78.
Awdy, 142.
Awennithion (Awenyddion), 264.
Ayr, 48, 332.

Bacchanals, 50–54.
Bacchic maidens, 274.
Bacchus, 36, 48, 51.
Bacchus-Dionysus, 48.
Bacon, Francis, 265; quoted, 150 f., 358.
Badammar, 99.
Baldred, St., 17.
Balkin, 35, 36.
Banister, 150.
Bannockburn, 63.
Barbour, John, 10, 63, 144, 146, 148, 154, 165, 206.
Bardus, 216.
Bar-jesus, 226.
Bartimaeus, 226.
Battle of the Frogs and Mice, 94.
Bayonne, 42.
Bede, 56, 80, 84, 150, 217.
Bedivere, Sir, 70.
Belelah (Belial), 35, 43, 44.
Bellenden, John, 14, 189.
Beltane, 49.
Bennat, 233.
Benoit, 174, 175.
Béowulf, 220, 221.
Berdok, king of Babylon, 40.
Bernlef, 353.
Berwick, 148.
Bethsaida, 226.
Bible, the, 6, 225 ff., 252, 263 f.
Biggar, 136, 137.
Bil-eygr, 102.
Billie Blin(d), 100–103, 108, 157 f., 160.
Bilwis, 158.
Black Prince, the, 144.
Blackwell, Thomas, 205 f., 237; quoted, 360 f.
Blái, 87.
Blair, Arnold, 208.
Blair, Master John, 106, 117, 121, 170–183, 208.
Blaise, Master, 176–180, 182.
Bledhericus, Blihis, 182 f.
Blind, 100.
Blind Guaire, 98, 99.
Blind Harry, the problem of, 3–13; Major's evidence, 14–25; *The Dwarf's Part of the Play*, 26–54; Blind Harry and faery, 55–78; the real Blind Harry, 96–115; Blind Harry and Blind Homer, 203–238. *See Life of William Wallace.*
Blindr (the Blind One), 230.
Blind the Bad, 158.
Blind the Bale-wise, 100, 102, 103.
Blind Willie, *see* Wandering Willie.
Boadach, 298.
Bôand, 229, 250.

Boccaccio, 131, 174, 175, 176; quoted, 260 f.
Bodhb Derg, 75.
Bödn, 248, 249, 250.
Boece, Hector, 14, 189.
Böl-eygr, 102.
Bölverkr, 158, 249.
Boethius, 176, 265.
Bolwis, 158.
Boneless, 36.
Book of Conquests, 81.
Book of Leinster, 88, 99, 213.
Book of Taliessin, 244 f., 257.
Book of the Chronicles of Scotland, 14.
Book of the Dean of Lismore, 64, 97, 155 f.
Book of the Dun Cow, 84, 88; quoted, 299.
Bower, Walter, 154.
Bradfute, Marian, 127, 340.
Bragaroethr, 215.
Bragi, 214 f., 248 f., 253.
Bran, son of Febal, 66 f., 85, 256.
Brand, John, 302.
Branwen, 159.
Brehon laws, 80.
Brendan, St., 217.
Breri, 182 f.
" Bret Glascurion," *see* Glasgerion.
Bridlington, 150.
Brigit, 215, 256.
Britons, 184.
Brittany, 119, 144.
Britto, 216.
Brogan, 76, 183.
Bromius, 51.
Brown, John Thomas Toshach, 9, 123, 127, 134 f., 142, 180; quoted, 10, 28, 29 f., 173 f., 328, 332, 338, 342.
Brownie, 35, 36, 43, 51.
Brownie-Puck, 47.
Bruce, Robert, 63, 130, 154.
Bruce, The, 10, 11, 148, 154.
Brut, 159.
Brutus, 119, 133, 185, 216, 265, 346.
Buan, 254.
Buchanan, George, 153.
Burlow Beanie, 102 f.
Burnet, William, 324.
Burns, Robert, 332; quoted, 6.
Bute, John, Marquess of, quoted, 289 f.
Byron, Lord, quoted, 361.

Cader Idris, 268.
Cadmus, 51, 53.
Caedmon, 84.
Caeilte, son of Ronan, 74, 75, 76, 86 ff., 90, 98, 161, 183, 219.
Caermarthen, 352.
Caer Sidi, 246.
Caesar, Julius, 35.
Cairell's wife, 81.
Cairpre, 256.
Caithness, 35, 123.
Calchas, 93, 212, 265.
Calliope, 77, 94.
Cambridge History of English Literature, quoted, 207 f.
Campbell, John Francis, quoted, 62, 306.
Campi Elysii, 257.
Canemor, 22.
Caradoc of Llancarvan, 119, 133.
Care, 236.
Caridwen, Ceridwen, 244 f., 256, 281.
Carl Blind, 158.
Carswell, Bishop, quoted, 299 f.
Cascorach, son of Cainchinn, 75, 76.

Cassandra, 93, 265.
Cattle-liftings, 89.
Caxton, William, 169, 186 ff., 194.
Cecrops, 93.
Celts, the, 243; Celtic folklore, 34, 44, 68, 72–77; the Celtic underworld connected with the classical, 48; influence of the religion of the British tribes on literature, 70 f.; Celtic bards, 79–92; comparison with bards in classical tradition, 92 f.; Celtic conceptions of poesy, 243–247, 279 ff.; inspired madmen, 267 ff.; gifts obtained by mortal visitors to the otherworld, 252–258; Giraldus Cambrensis on soothsaying, 264 f.
Chadwick, Hector Munro, quoted, 353.
Chalcis, 212.
Chalcondylas, Demetrius, 204.
Chambers, Edmund Kerchever, quoted, 315 f.
Champion's Ecstasy, The, 81 f.
Chandos, Earl of, 144.
Chanson de Roland, 220.
Charlemagne, 354.
Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy, 20.
Charteris, Henry, quoted, 168 f., 187.
Châtillon, Gauchier de, 144.
Chaucer, 8, 48, 76, 123, 124, 127–133, 135, 140, 144 f., 165, 174 ff., 206, 295, 332.
Chepman, Walter, 114.
Child, Francis James, 100 f., 112, 157 f.
Childs, Francis Lane, 12, 127, 194.
Chiron, 76.
Chrétien of Troyes, 69.
Christ, 226 f., 262, 264. *See* Jesus.
Christian Year, The, 278.
Cian, 252.
Cicero, 209, 269. *See* Tully.
Cieran, St., 84.
Ciniu, 47.
Cithaeron, 53.
Cleopatra, 272.
Clerk, John, 123.
Clio, 94, 132.
Clonmacnoise, 84.
Cnoc na Righ, 98.
Cnu, 74 f.
Cole, King, 32.
Colkelbie Sow, 322.
Collins, William, quoted, 298.
Colloquy of the Elders, 98, 219; quoted, 87.
Colophon, 211.
Columba, 80.
Colum Cille, 81.
Colville, Samuel, quoted, 306.
Comar, battle of, 87.
Comgan, 268 f.
Complaint of Anelida upon Arcite, 8.
Comyn, Michael, 64.
Conchobar, 271.
Conn of the Hundred Battles, 23, 81 f., 253.
Connaught, 66.
Connla, 253.
Connla's Well, 250 f., 255.
Corcyra, 94.
Cormac, 253 ff.
Cornwall, King, 102 f.
Corspatrick, 24.
Corybantian revellers, 274.
Court of Love, 123.
Couvin, Watriquet de, 144.
Craigie, William Alexander, 165; quoted, 9, 339.

Craik, George Lillie, quoted, 7 f.
Crawar, William, 142.
Creophylus, 211.
Cressida, 127.
Cretheis, 212.
Crunnchu, 87.
Cuchulinn, 46, 82 ff., 251, 271.
Cuilmenn, The, 83.
Cumaean Sibyl, the, 257.
Cumhail, 32.
Cummyn, Sir William, quoted, 140 f.
Cuvelier, 144.
Cyclopes, 352.

Daemonologie, 257.
Dag, 158.
Dagda, the, 75, 250, 256.
Daimones, 48.
Damascus, 225.
Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins, 24.
Dante, 204, 240, 260 f., 265, 275, 282, 358, 361.
Dares Phrygius, 175, 219.
Darnaway Castle, 140.
David, 35, 217.
Decies, 268.
Delphi, 223, 266.
Democritus, 279.
Demodocus, 93, 94, 210, 223, 224, 233.
Dempster, Thomas, 114, 205.
Denmark, 215.
De Nugis Curialium, 67.
Dereoil, 75.
Destructions, 89.
Dialogue of Oisin and Patrick, 156 f.
Diana, 322.
Dictaean Zeus, 262.
Dictionary of National Biography, 182.
Dictys Cretensis, 175, 219.
Dinnesenchas, 229, 250 f.
Diogenes Laertius, 348.
Dionysus, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 268, 274.
Don, court of, 34.
Dornoch, 123.
Douglas, Gavin, 76; quoted, 63.
Douglas, James, last Earl of, 148.
Douglas of Kilspendie, Archibald, 114.
Druids, the, 49, 246, 269, 271.
Druis, 216.
Dryden, John, quoted, 269.
Duff, William, 206.
Dunadoon, 78.
Dunbar, castle of, 153.
Dunbar, William, 14, 15, 23, 24, 25, 63, 72, 96, 104, 110, 112, 113, 122, 124, 163, 204; his *Dwarf's Part of the Play*, 26–54.
Dunkeld, 181.
Dunlop, John Colin, quoted, 174.
Dwarfs' Drink, 249.
Dwarf's Part of the Play, The, 26–54.
Dyer, Louis, quoted, 53 f.

Earl Brand, 101.
Ebro, the, 22.
Eddic lays, 214 f., 217 ff., 220, 247–250.
Edinburgh, 31, 47, 142, 302 f.
Edward I, king of England, 22, 136 f., 147.
Edward IV, king of England, 147 ff.
Eger, 69.
Eger and Grime, 69, 113.
Egypt, 270, 272.
Eildon Tree, the, 55.
Elaine, 271.
Elder Edda, 216.

Eli, 34.
Elijah, 263.
Elisha, 225.
Ellis, George, 206.
Elphin, 245.
Elton, Charles Isaac, quoted, 70 f.
Elymas, 226.
Elysium, 66, 252, 257.
Emania, 73, 74.
Emelye, 129.
Emer, 271.
Empedocles, 358.
Encyclopaedia Britannica, 163 f.
England, queen of, 139, 143.
Enoch, 34.
Ephorus, 209, 230.
Epimenides, 262.
" Eques Montanus," 114.
Erato, 94.
Erceldoun, Ercildoun, 55, 58, 108.
Erginas of Orchomenos, 297.
Eros, 268, 271.
Erroll, Earl of, 142.
Erse, the, 23 ff., 163.
Esirt, 73 f.
Eskdale, 149.
Eugaion, 212.
Eumolpus, 93.
Euripides, 50 ff.
Eurydice, 77, 272.
Evnissyen, 158 f.
Exchequer Rolls of Scotland, 113.
Ezekiel, 234.

Fail, 157.
Faile, 154.
Fairie Queene, 71.
Fal, the, 228.
Falkirk, 188.
Fand, 271.
" Far-Traveller," 92.
Faust, 110, 235 f.
Fawdoun, ghost of, 99, 104, 128, 129, 187.
Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry, The, by Veitch, quoted, 4 f.
Fehew, *see* Fitz Hugh.
Fenians, 155 ff., 159.
Ferdinand, 43.
Fergus mac Roich, 22, 73, 74, 83 f., 90.
Fergus Truelips, 89, 90.
Fiachu, 99.
Fian-lore, the, 74, 76.
Fianna, Fians, the, 75, 85–88, 89, 97 f., 213.
Fife, 143.
Fingal, 27.
Finn, Fionn, Finn mac Coul, Finn mac Cumhail(l), 63, 64, 65, 75, 77, 86, 88 ff., 96, 98, 99, 155, 156 f., 212 f.
Finnen of Moville, 81.
Fintan, 81.
Fintray, 156.
Firth of Forth, the, 143.
Fisher, Sydney George, quoted, 196 f.
Fitz Hugh, 136 f.
Fjallar, 248.
Flodden, 146, 165.
Flood, the, 81.
Florence, 204.
Flyting, of Dunbar and Kennedy, 23 f.; of Montgomery and Polwart, 49 f., 103.
Ford, Master, 266.
Ford, Paul Leicester, 197.
Forgoll, 88.
Forts, 89.
Fortune, 106, 126.
Fountain of Knowledge, the, 254, 255.

France, 187, 188, 192, 231.
France, king of, 137 f.
Francus, 216.
Friar Tuck, 112.
Froissart, Jean, 17.
Fyn MacKowle, *see* Fingal, Finn.

Gabhra, battle of, 85.
Gaels, the, 32, 160, 162; Gaelic tongue, the, 23 ff., 163; Gaelic tradition, 35, 62; Gaelic folk-lore, 44; Gaelic folklore and Blind Harry, 96–107, 109 f.; Scottish Gaelic verse, 64; Gaelic poem by Comyn, 64; the Gaelic inheritance in Scottish literature, 161–164.
Galarr, 248.
Galloway, 142.
Gangleri, 100, 219.
Garadh's Well, 98.
Garaidh, Garadh, Garry, or Gairri mac Morn, 97 f., 161.
Garnett, Richard, quoted, 208.
Garog, 43.
Gask Hall, 99.
Gathelus, 22.
Gaudifer de Larys, 306.
Gawain, 28, 32, 41, 271, 359.
Ge, 352.
Gefion, 215.
Genius astral, 35.
Geoffrey of Monmouth, 44, 118–123, 133, 151, 175, 182, 184 f., 198, 265.
Gessler, 195.
Giant Turk, the, 41, 43.
Gideon, 263.
Gildas, 333.
Gildon, Charles, 236.
Giraldus Cambrensis, quoted, 57 f., 182, 185, 264 f.
Gjallar-Horn, 229.
Glamis, Lord, 142.
Glasgerion, 76, 271.
Glasgow, 15.
Glass Fortress, the, 246.
Glaucus, 93.
Godefroy de Bouillon, 354.
Gododin, 313.
Goethe, 235 f.
Gog Magog, 27, 43, 44.
Gog's wife, 28.
Golden Isle, the, 272.
Goldyn Targe, 204.
Golias, Bishop, 219.
Goll mac Morna, *see* Gow mac Morn.
Gomorrah, 34.
Gower, John, 132.
Gow mac Morn, 28, 63 f., 89, 96 f., 155, 157.
Gowra, battle of, 87.
Gowrie, William, first Earl of, 114.
Graelent, 308.
Grail, the, 182.
Gray, Lord, 142.
Gray, Margaret Muriel, 326.
Gray, Sir Thomas, 154.
Gray, Thomas, of Libertoun, 171, 173.
Gray, Thomas, English poet, 278; quoted, 234, 255.
Gray Steil, 113 f.
Greece, 45, 47, 255.
Greek myth, 46, 252, 255, 266, 270.
Greek prophets, 264.
Greeks, 243.
Grimsby, 137, 171.
Gruffydd, William John, quoted, 313, 314.
Guaire Goll, 98, 99.
Gude Wallace, 319.

Guesclin, Bertrand du, 144.
Guest the Blind, 100.
Guido delle Colonne, 175, 176.
Guinevere, 271.
Guingamor, 67 f.
Gunnlöd, 248, 249, 298.
Guy, 26, 32, 41 f., 43, 57, 110.
Guyon, Sir, *see* Huon.
Gweir, 246, 247.
Gwenddydd, 359.
Gwion Bach, 245 f.
Gwydion, 34, 247, 251, 256, 316.
Gwyn ap Nudd, 71.
Gyges, 60.
Gylfaginning, 229.
Gyre (Gyir) Carling, the, 56, 103, 104.

Hades, 92, 246, 360.
Hagal, 101.
Hailes, Lord, 191; quoted, 151.
Halbjorn Hali, 84.
Hallowe'en, 49, 50.
Hamlet, 105.
Hamlet's father, 128.
Hamund, 158.
Hannibal, 292.
Hardyknute, 196.
Harlequin, 69.
Harog, 43.
Hárr, 99 f., 218 f.
Harry Gad, 320.
Harry the Minstrel, 163.
Hávamál, 218.
Hawes, Stephen, 123.
Head of Hades, the, 251.
Hebrew myth, 251.
Hebrew prophets, 264.
Hebrides, the, 302, 306.
Hecate, 104.
Hector, Sir, 271.
Heimskringla, 214.
Helen, 227, 270, 272.
Helenus, 93.
Helgi, 101, 102, 158.
Helgi Hundingslayer, 101.
Helgi Thorisson, 60.
Helicon, 255, 279, 360.
Hellekin, 69.
Henderson, Thomas F., quoted, 10 ff., 172.
Henry II, king of England, 68.
Henry of Huntingdon, 119.
"Henry the Minstrel," 6, 27, 59, 190, 208.
Henryson, Robert, 11.
Hephaestus, 94, 231.
Hera, 225, 360.
Heracles, 94, 360. *See* Hercules.
Heraclides, 209.
Hercules, 20, 38, 39, 44. *See* Heracles.
Hereward, 354.
Herla, 48, 68.
Hermes, 37, 77.
Hesiod, 48, 211, 212, 214, 322, 360.
Hibernia, 22.
Highlanders, ancestry of, 22 f.; bards among, 23 f.; the Erse, 23 f.; connection with the Irish, 22–25; at Bannockburn, 63.
Hill of the Kings, 98.
Hilton, Walter, quoted, 265 f.
Hind Etin, 104.
Hipparchus, 348.
Hippolyta, 273.
Historia Regum Britanniae, 118, 133, 184.
History of Britain, by Milton, 216 f.
History of Greater Britain, by Major, 15.
Hnitbjörg, 248, 249.

Hobgoblin, 40.
Hörselberg, 58.
Holland, Sir Richard, 23, 140.
Holyrood, 142.
Holy Spirit, the, 225 f., 263, 264.
Homer, 19 ff., 93 f., 175, 201 f., 203–238, 240, 265, 267, 322.
Horace, 279.
Horatio, 105, 128.
Horus, 212.
House of Fame, 76, 135.
Howlat, 23.
Hugh, *see* Aedh.
Hughes, John, quoted, 234.
Hume of Godscroft, quoted, 114.
Hunding, 101.
Huon of Bordeaux, Sir, 71.
Hyacinthus, 93, 94.

Iacchus, 51.
Iber, 22.
Iceland, 333.
Idunn, Idun, 215, 253.
Iliad, 94, 205, 237.
Ind, 32, 39, 52.
Indra, 251 f.
Ingeborg of the Glittering Plains, 60.
Innocent III, bull of, 299.
Inverallochy, 140.
Inverness, 61.
Ireland, 22, 23, 153.
Irish, the, poetry of, 21, 33; descent of, 22; supposed ancestors of the Highlanders, 22 f.
Irving, David, 193, 206, 327, 331, 339.
Irving, Washington, 198 ff.; quoted, 345 f.
Isis, 212.
Isle of Joy, the, 66.
Isle of Man, the, 41.
Isles of the Dead, 162.
Isocrates, quoted, 201.
Israel, 263.
Ithaca, 211.

Jack Harya, 320.
Jack Raker, 324 f.
James I, king of Scotland, 21, 153, 203.
James III, king of Scotland, 112 f., 153.
James IV, king of Scotland, 20, 23, 63, 113, 114, 302.
James V, king of Scotland, 42, 56, 63, 103, 114, 141, 231, 257.
Japhet, 216.
Jaques, 282.
Jean de Bourgogne, *see* Mandeville.
Jehovah, 227.
Jephthah, 263.
Jerome, St., 25, 265.
Jerusalem, 35.
Jesus, 263, 264. *See* Christ.
Juet, Robert, 346.
Jews, the, 226 f., 264.
Joan of Arc, 231.
Job, 217.
Jocelin of Furness, 300.
Johannaeus, quoted, 333.
John of Lynn, 171, 188.
John the Evangelist, St., 152, 185, 277; quoted, 44, 264.
Johnson, Samuel, 196.
Jonet the Widow, 320 f.
Jonson, Ben, 321.
Jop, 137, 171.
Josephus, Flavius, 207, 348.
Jove, 255, 282. *See* Zeus.
Joyce, Patrick, quoted, 300, 335.
Joyous Isle, the, 271.
Jubhdan, King, 73, 74.

Kay, Sir, 70.
Keble, John, 278 f.; quoted, 347.
Keightley, Thomas, quoted, 333.
Kennedy, Walter, 23, 24.
Kentigern, St., 58.
Kern of the Narrow Stripes, the, 311.
Kilspendie, *see* Douglas.
King Arthur and King Cornwall, 102.
King of Shadows, 71.
Kirk, Robert, 45, 358; quoted, 60 f.
Kittredge, George Lyman, 112; quoted, 174 ff.
Knickerbocker, Diedrich, 198 ff.
Knight's Tale, The, 127, 128, 129, 130, 171.
Kouretes, 48, 49, 52.
Kouros, 50.
Kvasir, 248.
Kvasir's Blood, 249.

Lady of the Golden Isle, the, 304 f.
Laegaire mac Neill, 82.
Lailoken, 58.
Laing, David, quoted, 339.
L'Allegro, 103.
Lament for the Makers, 14, 110, 112, 113, 124.
Lamerik, 142.
Lancaster, House of, 149.
Lancelot, 271.
Lancelot of the Laik, 326.
Land of Promise, the, 250, 253 ff.
Land of Women, the, 66.
Land of Youth, the, 64 f., 86.
Lang, Andrew, quoted, 344.
Langland, William, 37; quoted, 331.
Langtoft, Pers de, 194.
Lanval, 271, 308.
La Rochelle, 138.
Latin historical works, Major's opinion of, 17.
La Vie du Prince Noir, 144.
La Vie Vaillant Bertran du Guesclin, 144.
Layamon, 122, 159.
Lay of Aristotle, 360.
Lay of Narcissus, 360.
Lay of Oisin (Ossin), 64 f., 85 f.
Leabhar Gabhala, 81.
Leabhar na hUidhre, 84.
Leaf, Walter, quoted, 353 f.
Ler, 250.
Liban, 271.
Libeaus Desconus, 271 f., 304 f.
Liddell, 121, 133.
Liddesdale, 148.
Life of Dante, by Boccaccio, quoted, 260 f.
Life of Homer, by Blackwell, 205 f.
Life of William Wallace, 3 f.; real author of the, 116–146; purpose and spirit of, 148–169; Master Blair's "Latyn buk" the poet's supposed authority, 170–183; the *Wallace* as history, 184–202. *See* Blind Harry.
Linlithgow, 10, 332.
Linus, 93, 94.
Little Brawl at Almhain, The, 89.
Little John, 16.
Lives of the Scottish Poets, 206.
Llewarch Hen, Llywarch Hen, 79, 90 f.
Lochmaben, 148.
Lodan Lucharglan, 250.
Lodge, Henry Cabot, 197.
Loegaire mac Crimthain, 66.
Logres, 356.
Loki, 356.
Lollius, 131, 174 ff.
Lomond, Loch, 28.

London, 228.
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, quoted, 283.
Longueville, Thomas, 188.
Loosepain, 309.
Lordship of the Isles, the, 23.
Lorne, Lord of, 63.
Lot, 225.
Lothian, 143, 332.
Lough Neagh, 268.
Lucerne, 195.
Lucian, 209, 316, 356.
Lucifer, 34, 104.
Lug, 81 f.
Lunette, 308.
Lupracán, the, 73.
Luridan, 35, 43, 51.
Lycurgus, 211, 224.
Lydgate, John, 123, 320; quoted, 70.
Lyndsay, Sir David, 24 f., 42 f., 56 f., 63 f., 141 f.; quoted, 324.
Lyon Herald, 142.
Lyon King at Arms, 142.

Mab, 272.
Mabinogi, the, 159.
Mac-da-cerda, 268 f.
Macdonalds, the, 23.
Macdougals, the, 23.
Macewens, the, 23.
MacFadden, 24, 145, 163.
MacKay, 97.
Mackay, Aeneas James George, 16, 28, 344; quoted, 290, 325, 332.
Mackie, 97.
Maclauchlans, the, 23.
Macleod, 110.
MacLeod, Fiona, *see* Sharp.
MacLughach, 89.
Macneills, the, 23.
Macpherson, James, 196, 204.
Maelgwn, 280.
Magh Aei, 83.
Mag Mell, 66.
Magog, *see* Gog Magog.
Magus, 216.
Mahoun, 162, 163, 321.
Maitland Club, the, 191.
Major, John, 4, 7, 8, 9, 48, 115, 120 f., 160, 187 ff., 192, 194, 207, 332; his evidence, 14–25, 208; on prophets, 151 ff.; on prejudice, 166 *f.*; on King Arthur, 358 f.
Malory, Sir Thomas, quoted, 177.
Manannan MacLir, 254 f.
Mandeville, Sir John, 180 ff.
Manerus, 93.
Map, Walter, 48, 68, 203 f.
Mappa Mundi, 181.
Mar, Earl of, 153.
March, 256.
Marchmond Herald, 140.
Margaret, St., 334.
Margaret of Anjou, 149.
Margaret Tudor, Princess, 302.
Margites, 94.
Marie de France, 67.
Marlyng, *see* Merlin.
Mars, 219.
Marston, Philip Bourke, 236, 237.
Marvell, Andrew, quoted, 234.
Masefield, John, 237.
Masson, David, 164.
Master of Wisdom, 284.
Math, 247, 256.
Maximus of Tyre, 262.
Media, 51.
Medon, 211.
Meilerius, 57 f., 185, 358.
Melampus, 93.
" Men of Hu," 257.
Mercury, 214, 255

Mercutio, 266.
Merlin, 46, 56, 58, 73, 119 f., 149–155, 159, 176–179, 230, 246, 264 f., 321.
Merlin Sylvester, 58.
Merry Wives of Windsor, 266.
Merse, the, 143.
Mesnie Hellekin, 68 f.
Midsummer-Night's Dream, 45, 50, 242 f.
Milton, John, 210, 126 f., 233 ff., 236, 240, 303; quoted, 281 f.
Mimir, 229, 247.
Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, quoted, 108.
Minto, William, quoted, 164.
Moir, James, 172 f., 209 f.; quoted, 327, 335, 340.
Monarchy, The, 25.
Mongan, 46, 88.
Monkton Kirk, 105.
Monstrelet, Enguerrand de, 17.
Montgomery, Alexander, 23, 114; quoted, 49.
Mopsus, 93, 212.
Moran, Michael, 348.
Moray, Earl of, 140.
Morgain la Fée, 69, 70.
Morgan, Daniel, 345.
Morison, R., 205.
Morley, Henry, 207, 325.
Morn, Sons of, 161.
Morna, clan of, 98.
Morte Arthure, 169, 177, 186 f.
Moses, 227.
Mount Vernon, Virginia, 196.
Munster, 268.
Murray, Gilbert, quoted, 49.
Musaeus, 93, 322.
Muses, the, 77, 201, 221, 223 f., 233, 234, 268, 273 f., 322, 326, 360 f.
Myllar, Androw, 114.
Myrddin, 359.

Napoleon, 354.
Narcissus, 93.
Nash, Thomas, 110; quoted, 45.
Nealus, 22.
Nechtan, son of Colbran, 66 f., 85.
Nechtan, son of Labraid, 229, 250.
Nectanebus, 354.
Neilson, George, 136, 194; quoted, 12, 18, 201, 332; on the date of the *Wallace*, 147 ff., 328.
Neilson, William Allan, 290 f.
Neptune, 216.
Newark, 4.
News out of Purgatory, 110.
New Testament, the, 264.
New York, 198 ff.
Niall, 82.
Niamh, 64, 65, 77.
Nibelungenlied, 220.
Nicholson, William, 321.
Nine Worthies, the, 186.
Nissyen, 158 f.
Noah, 34.
Normans, the, 265.
North Berwick, 332.
Northern Fairies, 35.
Northumberland, 177, 178.
Norway, 214.
Numa, 358.
Nutt, Alfred, quoted, 45 f., 82, 90 f., 213, 251, 307, 336, 355.

Oberon, 39, 71.
Ocean Sea, the, 28.
O'Clery, Michael, 314.
Odin, 92, 99 f., 158, 159, 160, 213 ff. 217 ff., 220, 229, 230, 231, 247, 249 f., 251, 298, 308, 314.
Odrerir, 248, 249, 250.

Odysseus, 93, 224. *See* Ulysses.
Odyssey, 94, 210.
Oedipus, 53.
Oengus, 250.
Oger le Danois, 69 f.
Ogma Cermait, 256.
Ogmios, 316, 356.
Ogyrven, 256.
Oisin, *see* Ossian.
Olaf Tryggvason, 60, 217, 229.
Old Carl Hood, 158.
Old Poet, the, 284.
Olen, 93.
Ollarba, battle of, 87.
Olyfant, Lord, 142.
Olympus, 223.
O'Mahony, Fingin, 342.
O'Neill, Hugh, 335.
Onomacritus, 93.
Orpheus, 21, 76, 77, 78, 92, 93, 94, 203, 272 f., 322.
Oscar, 89.
Ossian, 62–66, 74 f., 77 f., 86 ff., 89, 90 f., 97, 98, 110, 155 ff., 160, 161, 212 f., 215, 219, 220; Macpherson's *Ossian*, 196, 204.
Ossian Dall, 86.
Ossian's Prayer, 155 f.
Ouchterhous, 134.
Ovid, 175, 176.
Owain Miles, 261.

Pagan Review, 162.
Palace of Honor, 63, 76.
Palamon, 128, 129 f.
Pallas, 255.
Pamphos, 93.
Pan, 37, 38, 44, 48, 50.
Paradise, 262.
Paradise Lost, 210, 236.
Paris, 15, 16, 17, 19, 138, 170.
Paris, Gaston, quoted, 308, 342.
Parker, Martin, 325.
Parnassus, 326.
Patrick, St., 64, 65, 74, 75, 76, 78, 80, 81, 82, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89 f., 98, 110, 155 ff., 183, 219, 300.
Paul, St., 259. *See* Saul.
Pausanias, 209.
Penelope, 211.
Pentheus, 53.
Perceval, Sir, 271.
Persephone, 260, 307 f.
Persians, the, 360.
Perth, 332.
Phaedrus, 267 f.
Pharais, 162.
Pharaoh of Egypt, 22.
Philammon, 93.
Philips, Ambrose, 205.
Phillips, Stephen, quoted, 235.
Philostratus, 211.
Phineus, 224, 233.
Picts, 168.
Piers Plowman, 30.
Pierus, 224.
Pindar, 255, 265.
Pisistratus, 209.
Plains of Pleasure, the, 66, 271.
Plato, 217, 227, 267 f., 270, 275, 279, 348, 354; quoted, 259 f., 273 f., 322, 361.
Play, allegorical figure, 47, 50.
Pliny Major, quoted, 360.
Plutarch, 94, 261; quoted, 350.
Pluto, 48.
Poema del Cid, 220.
Poesy, pedigree of, 284.
Polwart(h), Sir Patrick Hume of, 49; quoted, 50, 103.
Pomona, 35.
Prelude, 228.
Priam, 211.
Progress of Poesy, 255.

Prometheus, 283, 351.
Prophecy of Waldhave, 58.
Prophisies of Rymour, Beid, and Marlyng, The, 56.
Proserpina, 48.
Pryderi, 246.
Puck, 38, 39, 46.
Purgatory of St. Patrick, 261.
Pwyll, 246, 256.
Pythia, the, 267.

Quare of Jelusy, 123 ff., 126.
Quiggin, Edmund Crosby, quoted, 312.

Rabelais, 294.
Ramsay, John, scribe, 10, 14.
Ramsay, Sir John, 134.
Rath Cruachan, 161.
Red (Reid) Etin, the, 56, 103 f.
Redgauntlet, quoted, 108 f.
Register of Arms, 142.
Reid, Sir John, 113.
Remarks on the History of Scotland, 151.
Rhodes, Knights of, 139.
Rhŷs, Sir John, 246; quoted, 90, 247, 251 f., 316.
Richard I, king of England, 17, 354.
Richard of St. Victor, quoted, 361 f.
Rig-Veda, the, 252.
Ritson, Joseph, 196.
Robert, Earl of Gloucester, 119.
Robert of Brunne, 179, 194.
Robin Goodfellow, 36, 39 f., 45, 47, 103, 110.
Robin Goodfellow, 46.
Robin Hood, 16, 112, 354.
Rochester, 16.
Rollins, Hyder Edward, 325.
Roman de Merlin, 177, 178.
Romans, 266.
Romanus, 216.
Rome, 181, 192, 219.
Romulus, 219.
Roscommon, 83.
Ross, Earl of, 123.
Ross, John Merry, quoted, 172.
Ross Herald, the, 134.
Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 236.
Round Table, the, 70, 108, 272.
Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 361.
Russ, Melchior, 195.

Saemund's Edda, 158.
Saga, seeress, 247.
Saga of Olaf Tryggvason, 60.
St. Andrews, 15.
St. David's, church of, 57.
St. Johnston, 127, 143.
Samson, 86, 263.
Samuel, 346.
Sanskrit myth, 251 f.
Saron, 216.
Satire of the Three Estates, 63.
Satyr, 51.
Saul, 225 f., 263. *See* Paul.
Saxo Grammaticus, 195; quoted, 158.
Saxons, 68, 264.
Scandinavians, the, 213 f.; Scandinavian or Old Norse myths, 60, 84, 92, 213–216, 217–219, 229, 247–251, 253, 255.
Scath, 82, 251.
Schipper, Jakob, 27–29.
Scone, stone of, 22.
Scot, Michael, 265.
Scot, Reginald, quoted, 36.
Scota, 22.
Scotichronicon, 192, 201.

Scotland, fairies and fiends in, 43, 49; the *Wallace* and Scottish national feeling, 5, 146, 147 ff., 160, 165–168; political prophecies, 151–155; the Gaelic inheritance in Scottish literature, 161–164.
Scott, Alexander, 39.
Scott, Sir Walter, 3, 4, 55, 107 ff., 330; quoted, 5, 339.
Scotticism, 163 f.
Scottish Vernacular Literature, by T. F. Henderson, quoted, 10 ff.
Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies, 45.
Secret Well, the, 229.
Selund, 215.
Semele, 46, 51.
Senchan Torpeist, 83.
Seneca, quoted, 269.
Séon, 250.
Shakespeare, 39, 45, 105, 240, 242 f., 266, 270, 272, 279, 361.
Shannon, the, 251.
Sharp, William, 161 f.; quoted, 77 f.
Shaw, Quentin, 112.
Shelley, Percy Bysshe, quoted, 282, 283.
Sibyl, 218, 219, 221, 247.
Sigar, 158.
Siloam, pool of, 226.
Silver Branch, the, 254.
Simeon, 263.
Simon Magus, 321.
Sinclair, Bishop, 181, 329.
Sinend, 250 f.
Sion Kent, 257.
Sirens, 224.
Sir John Rowll's Cursing, 43.
Sir Orfeo, 272.
Sir Tristrem, 59, 108.
Skaldskaparmál, 247–250.
Skeat, Walter William, 127.
Skelton, John, 165 f., 320; quoted, 337.
Smith, George Gregory, quoted, 294.
Snorri Sturluson, 92, 99 f., 214, 215, 216, 219, 229, 247–250.
Snowdon, 268.
Socrates, 266, 354.
Sodom, 34, 225.
Sokkmimir, 229.
Solomon, 35, 86.
Solon, 348.
Són, 248, 249, 250.
Sophocles, 53.
Spain, 22.
Spenser, Edmund, 123; quoted, 37, 329.
Spottiswood, John, 114.
Srub Brain, 66.
Stanley, house of, 146.
Statius, 175, 176.
Stesichorus, 227.
Stevenson, Joseph, 191 f.
Stewart, John Alexander, quoted, 362.
Stirling, 113.
Stobo, 112 f., 114.
Story of England, 179.
Strabo, quoted, 49.
Strode, Ralph, 132.
Stubbes, Thomas, quoted, 303.
Stygian Jupiter, the, 20.
Suidas, 236.
Sultan-land, 26, 32, 41.
Sunk-bench, 247.
Sutherland, 35.
Suttungr, 248, 249.
Sveinsson, Brynjolf, 333.
Sweden, 215.
Swegdir, King, 308.

Swiss, the, 195.
Syria, 29.
Syrians, 225.

Tahiti, 359.
Táin bó Cuálgne, 83, 89.
Taliessin, 33, 34, 51, 79, 244 ff., 279 ff.
Tam Lin, Tamlane, 59 f.
Tannhäuser, 58.
Tara, 254.
Tarlton, Richard, 110.
Taylor, Rupert, 151.
Teigue, 252 f.
Tell, William, 195, 354.
Thamyris, 94, 224, 233.
Thebes, 51, 52.
Theophilus Insulanus, 110.
Theopompus, 211.
Theseus, 243, 270, 273.
Thomas, Anglo-Norman poet, 182 f.
Thomas à Becket, 80, 106.
Thomas of Brittany, 59.
Thomas Rhymer, 55–57, 59–62, 68, 72, 80, 105 f., 107, 108, 109, 110, 149 ff., 152–155, 259.
Thomson, James, quoted, 302.
Thrace, 352.
Thucydides, 209.
Timarchus, 261.
Tiresias, 53, 54, 224, 225, 233, 234, 265.
Tir na nOg, 64 f., 85.
Titans, the, 33, 352.
Tokko, 195.
Tolomer, 179.
To Milton — Blind, 235.
Tomnafurach, 62.
Tom Tumbler, 36.
Tours, 346.
Treasurer's Accounts of Scotland, 111, 112, 113, 142 f.
Tristram, Tristrem, 70, 108, 183, 270.
Troilus, 127, 128, 131 f., 141, 174.
Trojans, 265.
Trojan War, the, 176, 211, 219.
Trophonius, 262.
Troy, 34, 94, 265.
True Thomas, *see* Thomas Rhymer.
Tuan MacCairill, 80 f., 304.
Tuatha de Danann, 44, 46, 75, 254.
Tully, 204. *See* Cicero.
Tundalus, 110.
Turk and Gawain, The, 41.
Turkey, 215.
Turks, the, 36.
Two Fiddlers, the, 68.
Tylor, Edward Burnett, quoted, 216, 239, 266 f., 299, 359.
Tytler, Patrick Fraser, quoted, 189 f., 191, 343 f.
Tzetzes, John, 214.

Ucht Cleitigh, 87.
Ulster, 73, 81.
Ulysses, 20. *See* Odysseus.
Uranus, 352.
Uri, 195.
Urien, 256.
Urthin Wadd Elgin, 35.
Uther Pendragon, 152, 246.

Valfather, 218, 229.
Vani, 248.
Varia Capella, *see* Falkirk.
Vegtamr, 92.
Veitch, John, quoted, 4 f., 6, 339.
Veitch, William, 324.
Venus, 127, 131.
Verona, 260.
Virgil, 257, 326, 354.
Virgin, the, 42, 105 f.